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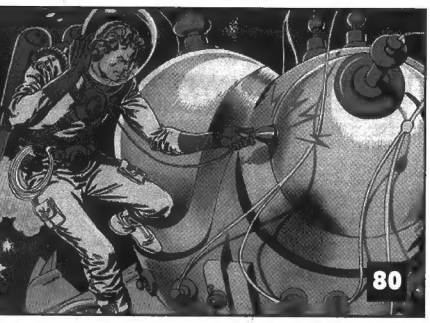

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Issue Number #60, June 1998

ON THE COVER: Lubbers' original art from **Planet** #44 (Sep 1946).

ABOVE: Reed Crandall's original art for **Dollman** #40 (Jun 1952).

So Long Alex...

My first "meeting" with Alex Schomburg was in the Coronado Central Elementary Library. I was nine. We were told to research the Revolutionary War for the next hour, then return to class ready to give a short report. But, as happened on many earlier trips to the library, I was immediately seduced by the science fiction shelf. There they kept my old friends *When Worlds Collide, The Time Machine, First Men In The Moon,* and *John Carter Of Mars.*

The library shelves also cradled the Winston Juvenile Science Fiction series. The stories in these were OK... but the best thing about them were the end papers. God, How I loved those drawings, especially the collage at the beginning. It was positively hypnotic, and I often whiled away my library "research time" in a sci-fi trance, traveling deep and unhindered into the unlimited realms of my imagination for whole class periods, while other students wasted their time on less interesting assignments. I didn't know it at the time, but I had Alex Schomburg to thank for those magnificent drawings.

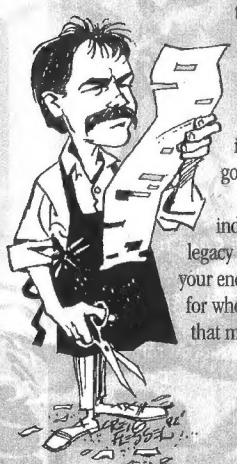
My second "contact" with Schomburg came at Collector's Book Store in Hollywood when I was in high school. Co-owner Malcolm Willits was extolling the virtues of "The greatest comic artists" to a gathered group one Saturday morning. I joined the small audience just as Malcolm finished discussing Barks and began his dissertation on "the great Alex Schomburg." He then held up a few original Schomburg cover recreations to underscore his point. They were incredible and from that point on I would forever be a convert to the loyal group of Schomburg fans.

Many years went by, and in 1991 *CBM* was born. For the fifth issue, I wanted to do a tribute to Schomburg, and so I began contacting collectors of his work all over the country. Then one day about two weeks before presstime I got a fateful call.

"Gary Carter? This is Alex Schomburg." His voice was soft spoken... even gentle. He had heard of the tribute issue and wondered if I needed any help with history or materials.

I could hardly speak... but managed to keep up my end of the conversation. I told him how much I had always admired his work... how throngs of collectors avidly sought out any art he had ever done... and why I thought his airbrush covers were so remarkable.

I was trying so hard not be "gushy" or overly complimentary, but I was unable to hold back my enthusiasm. I spent the majority of that precious 20-minute conversation telling Alex Schomburg how much I appreciated his work... how important it is in science fiction and comic book history... how much his artwork for the endpapers of the Winston Juvenile Science Fiction series meant to me... and most of all what a privilege it was to speak with him.



His response was the epitome of modesty... "I was just doing my job."

CBM #5 and #26 (another Schomburg tribute) came and went, and soon it was common knowledge that Alex was in ill health. Now Alex Schomburg is gone... and another immortal has left us.

So long Alex Schomburg and thanks. Your incredible contributions to the industry, the hobby, and to my childhood will always be treasured. Your greatest legacy is the fact that, right now in school libraries, young readers are still staring at your endpaper drawings... still traveling the unlimited realms of their imaginations for whole class periods... and wondering about the man who created the drawing that made it all possible...

Gary

Gary M. Carter, Editor

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS AND ARTISTS
Murphy Anderson • Christian K. Berger
Jon Berk • Arnold T. Blumberg
Bob Brodsky • Eric Brown • Steve Carey
Paul Castiglia • John Clements
Gary Colabuono • Ray Connell
J. Keith Contarino • Jack Curtin • Tony Didio
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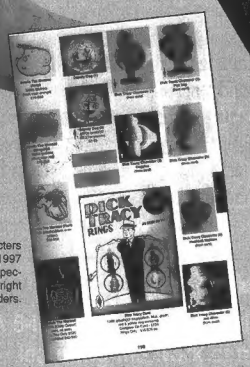

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Love collecting

In regards to Rick Roe's CBM Forum (issue #58)... what a great find, Rick made! I agree with a lot he had to say. I too really enjoy your magazine and how it's done. I've been a collector now for 40 years and still love collecting... perhaps even more than I did then.

As a kid my uncle and his uncle were comics collectors and readers (my Mother read them too as a kid). My aunt worked at Woolworth's and would bring me and my brothers the 3/4 cover comics. So we always had plenty of reading and trading books. Then one day my uncle took me over to a friend of his. He had a whole room in house for his comics. There were stacks of comics everywhere, he said that he had every comic ever made. From that day on, comics were in my blood. That is what I wanted, every comic (ha!ha!ha!ha!ha!ha!) and at nine I thought it was possible.

I'll never get rich off my collection but they are fun to read and I read them all. That is why I like your book so much; because it's by and for people who love comics. I like to read it all, my favorites are Nolan's Notebook and the letter pages. It's fun to read about the high dollar books and the low dollar books. It's interesting to see what everyone else is into collecting.

As for comic history, I've been buying books on it ever since "The Great Comic Book Heroes" by Jules Feiffer came out in 1965. So in closing to Rick Roe, there are still people out here that care about all forms of the hobby. Thanks.

Rod Matlack, Colorado

Great mag as always!!!!

Just wanted to drop you a line of support for your terrific magazine! I don't generally buy comic book related mags but I anxiously await the arrival of yours every month...the articles and overall art direction are fantastic and I hope you continue for hundreds of issues... a real class act!

Regarding issue #58, I wanted to thank you for choosing that particular Space Family Robinson issue for your cover as I own the original art to it...had I only known, I would have gladly supplied you with a transparency (sans lettering) for your cover...the original is absolutely beautiful!

Perhaps in the future you could cover the work of Harvey Isenburg...an incredibly prolific artist that had ties in live-action, animation, television, newspaper strips AND comics. In fact, any more funny animal comic coverage in your mag would be appreciated and welcome.

Well, that's it, thanks again and keep up the great work!

Jordan Reichek via E-mail

About time

Read the latest issue of Comic Book Marketplace (#57), March 1998, special Curt Swan issue, and all I can say is that it's about time someone dedicated a book to one of the best artists to ever work in comics. I'm not knocking Kirby, Wood, Frazetta, etc., but they've all been done many times over.

And that Superman Annual-like pencil sketch from 1995 was fantastic. I think Curt Swan did for Superman in the comics what George Reeves did for Superman on the TV screen. Wayne Boring and Al Plastino were both very good artists, but Curt Swan was always my favorite.

Does CBM have any plans for Superman's 60th Anniversary? (1938 to 1998).

Dennis Petilli, New York

CBM #63 celebrates Superman's 60th Anniversary! If any readers would like to contribute articles to the issue, give me a call so we can discuss your proposal (619-437-1996).

Gave Me Pause

Now, after reading dozens of issues of your magazine, I too finally feel compelled to take a few moments to applaud your contribution (and the contributions of your staff) to the hobby. CBM does a wonderful job of exploring comics in terms of their artistic merits, their writing or story telling qualities, and their social/historical significance. It provides fascinating background on artists, writers, pioneers and other significant individuals who have been a part of comic book history. Perhaps most importantly, CBM accomplishes all this without taking itself too seriously and by celebrating the fact that comics are just plain fun! Hats off!

My brother and I have *(Continued on page 8)*

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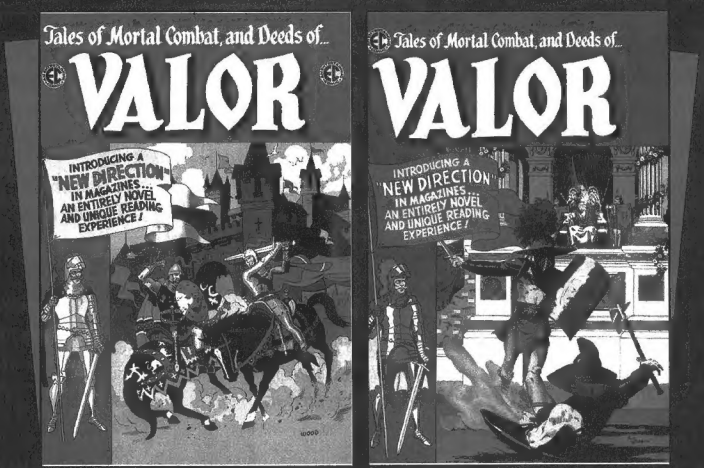
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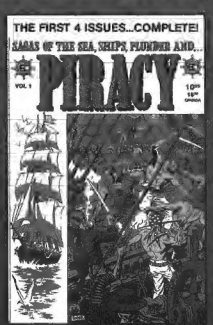

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been collecting comics for about 25 and 35 years respectively. I have to confess that, for much of those years, we have been "Fearless Marvel Zombies." Your publication has done wonders to open up other doors to us and has expanded our interests and collections significantly. Even as "Reformed Marvel Zombies," however, we occasionally need a "fix." As such, CBM #54, featuring Captain America and Daredevil was a welcome treat. The focus on Marvel characters was such a pleasant surprise, that it gave me pause to examine past issues.

I noticed that between issue #30 and #50, nearly half of the CBM covers featured a DC story/character. None featured Marvel characters (Golden Age, Atlas, or Silver Age). During the same span of issues, there were over 60 DC articles, while only slightly over one quarter of that number were stories focused on Marvel/Atlas. I'm curious whether this apparent "bias" in favour of DC stories over Marvel/Atlas reflects the collecting interests of your staff or other reasons. Do you have a shortage of people to do Marvel/Atlas articles? I have enjoyed articles on Space Cabby, the "Forgotten 44" and DC gorilla covers, but it's curious that no stories have been done on Iron Man, Thor and other Marvel characters that have been around for 35 years. How many stories have been done on JLA compared with the Avengers?

On a different note, my brother and I read with some curiosity the articles on Marvel price variants. He has a couple of similar issues that mark the transition from the 10¢ to 12¢ Marvel. Both Gunsmoke Western #68 and Love Romances #97 have covers that have a 12¢ sign and a 10¢ sign that has been "machine-inked out." We recently have seen a version of the GW #68 with only a 12¢ sign on it, thereby confirming the existence of at least two versions of this comic (might there also exist a 10¢ version?). I'm curious whether other CBM readers can shed some light on the 10¢ to 12¢ transition for Marvel comics and the existence of related variants.

Again, thanks for a publication that my brother and I devour monthly.

Robert McSheffrey, Ontario, Canada

We prints 'em as we gets 'em... and I welcome any and all contributions from Marvel fans. Perhaps you and your brother might write somethiung for us in the near future (give me a ring and let's see if we can come up with something). Oh by the by... just so you know I'm not trying to ignore the needs of "Marvel Zombies" (reformed or not), I'd like to mention that CBM #61 features Human Torch vs. Spider-Man and a tribute to Stan Lee and issue #64 spotlights the X-Men. Thanks for your kind comments and your right-on suggestions, they are much appreciated!

Pulp coverage

Please renew my subscription to your fine magazine for another year. While I subscribe to many other publications, I look forward to receiving my copy of CBM each month more than any other.

I have really enjoyed your recent coverage of pulp magazines and related items. This is a fascinating subject that I'm sure many collectors are interested in. Please continue your excellent coverage of this comic-related collectible.

Thomas Martin, Ohio

Atlas/Seaboard

Have recently rediscovered the Atlas/Seaboard comics that Larry Leiber published back in 1974-1975. A fellow collector advised me that a terrific article about these books ran a while ago. I would enjoy reading this article, especially if it has a complete listing of titles published during that heady four month period of time. Which issue was this article run in? Keep up the great work. Your publication is terrific.

Peter Rosengarten, via E-mail

See Overstreet's Golden Age Qarterly #2, Page 64 for the article and the list.

Overdue tribute

As an avid fan of Curt Swan since 1960 (when I read my first Superman comic) I welcomed Eddy Zeno's overdue tribute to arguably the most underrated artist in comicdom (CBM #57). When Swan succeeded Wayne Boring as Superman's lead draftsman in the late '50s, his assigned mission was to humanize the Man of Steel, make him less stiff and more personable. As Zeno pointed out so eloquently, Swan brought a humanity and nobility to his characters, often exceeding what *(Continued on page 10)*

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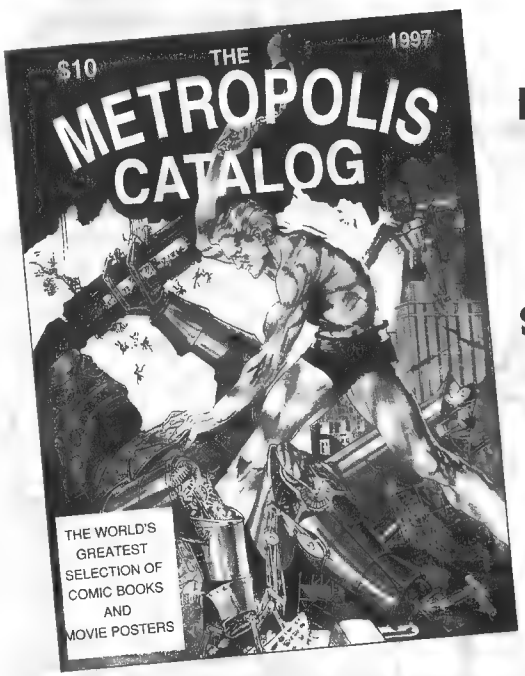

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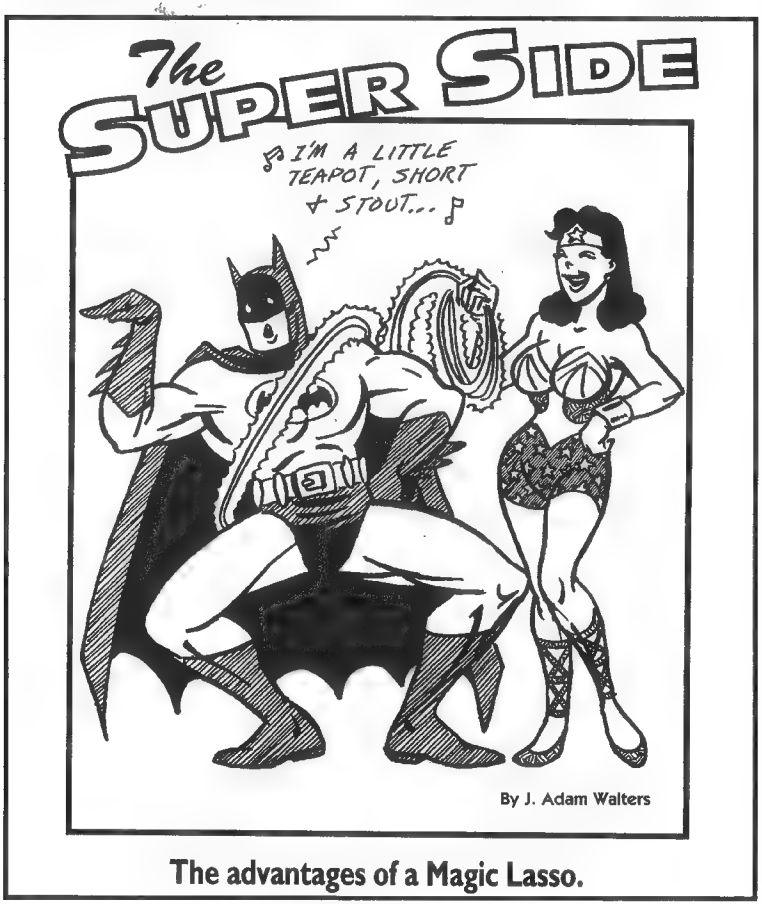
was called for in the scripts. His accurate anatomical renderings, subtle facial expressions, and sophisticated hand gestures, evoked a natural grace "far beyond the powers" of ordinary artists. Swan's style was uncluttered but never condescending or juvenile. For example, he put a lot of thought into how Clark Kent's "slouch" would make him appear two inches shorter than his alter-ego, all the better to fool Lois and Jimmy. And his square-jawed profile of Superman was intentionally reminiscent of George (TV's Superman) Reeves without resorting to obvious caricature.

Just as Jack Kirby reinvented hyperbolic action for Marvel, Curt Swan was, in Carmine Infantino's words, "without peer" in his naturalist portrayals of DC's brightly colored universe of stalwart heroes and dastardly villains. Looking back at the early '60s art of Swan, Infantino, Murphy Anderson, and Gil Kane is to rediscover fantasies of space-age knights and knaves, and fantastic worlds to be explored. Swan's artistic peak during the early Silver Age happily coincided with the baby boomers' pre-adolescence and DC's hegemony in the marketplace, when each title in the Superman family regularly sold several hundred thousand copies monthly. Publishers today would sell their souls for such numbers!

Curt Swan's contributions to comic art have been understated for at least two reasons. During this age of innocence, artists and writers worked almost anonymously, without credit lines. Beyond this, Superman was then considered a "starter" comic, too wholesome or "square" for maturing adolescents. How might Swan be regarded today if he had spent the decade perfecting the darker stylings of a Batman? How might Swan's talents have evolved had he worked with Stan Lee on Thor or (what heresy!) the Fantastic Four? Alas, most comic book historians are in touch with their "inner teenager," which readily explains why Spider-Man, X-Men et al., are so revered (and justifiably so). But if more of us tuned in to our "inner 10-year old," we might also come to appreciate DC's and Curt Swan's—equally significant contribution to wonders past. My young daughter has no patience for today's super-steroid-mutant-tough guys, but she seeks out the crafted plot lines and clean line renderings of the "old comics."

One quick question: Curt Swan once said in an interview that his all-time favorite inker "for the record" was not George Klein, not Murphy Anderson, but Al Williamson. Williamson, he noted, added architectural detail which greatly enhanced his own pencils. Now… where can I get hold of some Swan-Williamson art?

Martin Russell, California



The advantages of a Magic Lasso.

Priceless Comics

Like to add to what Rod Matlack said in his letter in CBM #57 about price variants. His letter spurred me to dive into my collection for an enjoyable day of searching. I don't know how useful this info is, but knowing comic collectors, I'm sure at least a few collectors out there will find this trivia as interesting as I did!

Other than the April 1957 New Funnies, here in chronological order are some more early Dells I found with 15¢ cover prices:

Duck Album 4-C #782 (Mar '57); Donald Duck #58 (May-Jun '57); Covered Wagons, Ho! 4-C #814 (Jun '57); Bugs Bunny #55 (Jun-Jul '57); Mickey Mouse #54 (Jun-Jul '57); Donald Duck #54 (Jul-Aug '57); Daffy #10 (Jul-Sep '57); Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #203 (Aug '57); Nancy #147 (Oct '57); Daffy #11 (Oct-Dec '57); Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #211 (Apr '58)—(a strange book that doesn't even have an indicia!); and Looney Tunes #201 (Jul '58)

A second group of books are 1957-58 Dells which perhaps had been planned as 15¢ comics and then were pasted over by a 10¢ price, although I'm not sure. These are different because the 10¢ price is enclosed in a small black square. Here's my quick list of these:

Annie Oakley & Tagg #14; Bugs Bunny #59, Daffy #14; FC #790, 791, 822, 833, 845, 846, 875, 878, 889, 895, 898, 900, 903, 907, 912, 917, 920; Looney Tunes #193; Queen of the West Dale Evans #21 (the only one I've found with 'Still 10 cents' in a black box); Tarzan #100, Tweety & Sylvester #17; Uncle Scrooge #19, 20, 21; and Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #205.

Another interesting group of books are Dells with two 15¢ prices on the cover. These include:

Andy Panda #54; FC #1182 and 1184; Peanuts

#9; and Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #247.

As well, Dell Giant #42 and 43 have two 25¢ prices on the cover. And, Canadian editions of early Dell Giants have higher prices on their covers than the American version. (e.g. 30 or 35¢ instead of the American 25¢ price.) Also, I own a Canadian edition of Cinderella FC #272 (Apr '50) which has a 15¢ cover price.

Even more fascinating (and something I've wondered about for a while) are comics with no cover price! Here are the ones I've found so far:

Our Fighting Forces #11 (Jul '56); Adventure #227 (Aug '56); Showcase #3 (Aug '56); Daisy Duck's Diary FC #743 (Nov '56); Dotty Dripple and Taffy 4-C #746 (Nov '56); Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #244 (Jan '61); Porky Pig #74 (Jan-Feb '61); Grandma Duck's Farm Friends FC #1161 (Feb-Apr '61); and Two-Fisted Tales (Gemstone reprint) #14 (Jan '96)

Maybe some DC or Dell fans out there can add to my lists and share the info with all. And does anyone have any explanation (apart from a printing error) for why these comics would be "priceless"?

Anyway, all of this again prove the point that you, Gary, have mentioned more than once: there are myriad possibilities for comics research, and doing this research into one's back issue collection often results in enjoyable hours spent in ferreting out minutiae! And after all, that should be the main reason a person gets involved in this (or any other) hobby: as an enjoyable way to relax. Thanks for the great magazine.

Shannon Burns, Alberta, Canada

How many have all 10?

I am writing concerning the Gene Autry Fawcetts. In the Photo-Journal, #1 is listed as an 8 and #2 as a 7, none of the 10 comics in the set seem to be easy to find. They say that 11 to 20 issues of #1 exist. Is there any way to find out where they are and how many collectors have all 10 in their collection. Starting with myself, I have all ten. If there are others out there who have these books I would enjoy finding out where and how many exist, if this is possible. Please write via CBM. Thanks in advance.

John Butt, Newfoundland, Canada

IMRA... not MIRA

Great Legion issue (#57). As a 6-year member of KLORDNY, a LEGION "a.p.a." (amateur press alliance) I couldn't miss it.

A few points. Thanks for printing the pic of "Firebrand." So that's who Roy Thomas was referring to when he created his LONG-running female "Firebrand" in All-Star Squadron. I'd certainly never heard of the "original."

In one of the various retellings of their background and origin, it was made clear that, in a twist of "obvious" chronology, Supergirl had actually joined the LSH first! (You can have paradoxes like this when you're time-traveling.) Thus it WAS Brainiac 5 in the background of Adventure #247. Since the infamous post-ZERO HOUR "reboot," thankfully, most confusing bits like this have been eliminated from current readers' worries.

I noticed you glossed over the later periods of the series. Considering where it all led to (and it being the main cause of ZERO HOUR and the current series) perhaps this was for the best. But at least a mention or visual depiction of the works of Jeff Moy (whose "cartoon" style is reminiscent of some '60's TV sci-fi cartoons) and Stuart Immonen (who I feel is currently the best artist working for DC) might have been called for. After all, comics should be collected to be read—and the current LSH is some of the most readable and entertaining in the series entire history.

P.S. On your list of "alter egos," Saturn Girl is IMRA, not MIRA! Ohhhh, you're going to catch hell from at least one of our members for that typo!

Henry R. Kujawa, New Jersey

Plea from sequential reader

Just a few words to let you know that I enjoyed CBM #57. This issue has it all. My favorite series (the Legion) reviewed; the very first artist I learned to identify and recognize in comics (Curt Swan) profiled. It's frightening to think that the O'Neil/Swan sand creature storyline was the first time I encountered Superman in comics some 20 years ago when it appeared in French (boy, do I feel old).

It's been more than 2 years now that I've been reading CBM every month and I like it every time. Just two questions: How come that the main articles in every issue are cut and spread throughout the mag ? It makes it sometimes hard to follow (I'm a sequential reader so it's disturbing). Sometimes I happen to read the end of an article before the beginning of it. Can you present them one after another with just ads in-between?

I would like to get some information about something called Big Little Books. I found one about Mandrake at a convention one year ago and I see it's dated 1931. I understand that it sort of fills in a gap between pulps and comics. Since

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you cover both, why not an article about big little books ? If not, can you let me know where I can get some info about them?

It would be great. Farewell.

J.C. LeBourdais, Paris, France

We set the articles in CBM to (1) adapt to the color section placement as well as (2) attempt to start several features on the front side of the centerfold. In magazine architecture terms this is known as a "feature well" and is an attempt to entice "thumbers" (those that pick up a magazine and thumb through it at the stands) into buying the issue by exposing them to as many "openers" on the front of the magazine as possible. Check out most magazines and you'll see what I mean. I think if you'll just follow the little "continued on page ..." lines that lead you from one jump page (another magazine architecture term)to another you'll be anble to follow the text pretty well. I do agree that it makes some articles a little harder to read.

As for BLB's, the best reference I know of is the BLB listing that Bob Overstreet use to put in the back of his newsstand-distributed, paperback size Price Guide. Perhaps a CBM reader who has one could make you a copy and forward it to you via CBM?

Steranko Issue

Can you please reprint the issue of CBM (#28) that had the feature on Jim Steranko. I have called dealers all over the country looking for that book, but it can not be found! PLeeeeeeeeeeeease reprint it! Thanks,

Anthony Tothe, via E-mail

If you've perused Marketplace Mail the last few issues you'll know why I'm a little gun-shy about reprints. But take heart in the knowledge that we are planning an "Annual" (CBM Special #2) that will include selected articles from CBM #22-29. Watch this department for future announcements!

Strange Fantasy

Have always been very intrigued by how the Comics Code Authority affected the content of post-code comics, especially during the late '50s and early '60s. We know that the 1955 implementation of the Code killed off the horror and crime genres. A couple of these books that survived the Code (such as Strange Suspense Stories) radically changed their content to appease the Comics Code.

But it seems that, unofficially at least, the Code sometimes applied a different set of standards to the more traditional superhero comics. For instance, Part A of the general standards of the Comics Code clearly states that "No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime, with the exception of those crimes that are so farfetched of pseudo-scientific that no would-be lawbreaker could reasonably duplicate them." Adherence to this single clause was a nail in the coffin of crime comics.

Nevertheless, issue #43 of Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen (March 1960) flagrantly violates this clause. In this issue Jimmy Olsen infiltrates a gang of thieves and in order to gain their trust he carries out a series of capers. For instance he instructed the mob in the ABCs of how to rob a jewelry store by a) using chewing gum stuck to the palm of the hand to lift off the gems from a display tray, b) squeezing the gem into the gum so as to hide it under a shop counter, and c) having a female confederate enter the shop and remove the hidden gem. These instructions for a crime are far more realistic and detailed than those found in the majority of pre-Code crime books I have read! I can almost imagine some kid trying it out! Has there been much research into the apparent violations of the Comics Code during the decade after its implementation? Do any of your readers know of other interesting examples?

My second question... I have a copy of Strange Fantasy #9 published by Ajax. I have the issue that does not have the Ditko story, but instead the interior of another comic rebound. The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide lists the interior possibilities as being Black Cat or Boy's Ranch, both Harveys. My issue has the interior of a war comic I have not been able to identify. Are there other interiors for this book, or is this a true rarity not yet documented by Overstreet? Besides Sad Sack, did Harvey even publish a War Comic? Is there a war collector, Harveyfile, or an Ajax afficionado out there who can help?

Jeff Bass, California

Seven Times Guide

I (as have many of your loyal readers) have come to rely on you and your staff as a source for accurate information and well thought out opinion and commentary. I have two questions which I'd like to pose, but first let me provide a little background information.

About six years back, I took notice of the incredible covers of some of the books published by Harry A. Chesler. My first opportunity to purchase one happened almost immediately. I purchased a copy of Dynamic Comics #11 through a phone auction. The bidding was heated, and I ended up paying about (boy this is embarrassing!) five times guide for it.

The next incident of note was my recent pur-

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chase of a lower grade copy of Punch #12 for over seven times current Guide! In regard to the Punch #12, it was the first copy for sale I had ever found! I never saw it listed in any mail order catalogues, and various dealers told me "it's a tough book to find" and "it should be a 7, 8, or 9 in the Gerber books."

So here are the questions I'd like your considered opinion on:

1) Is the Gerber Guide's Scarcity Index of 6 accurate for Punch #12, and Dynamic #11?

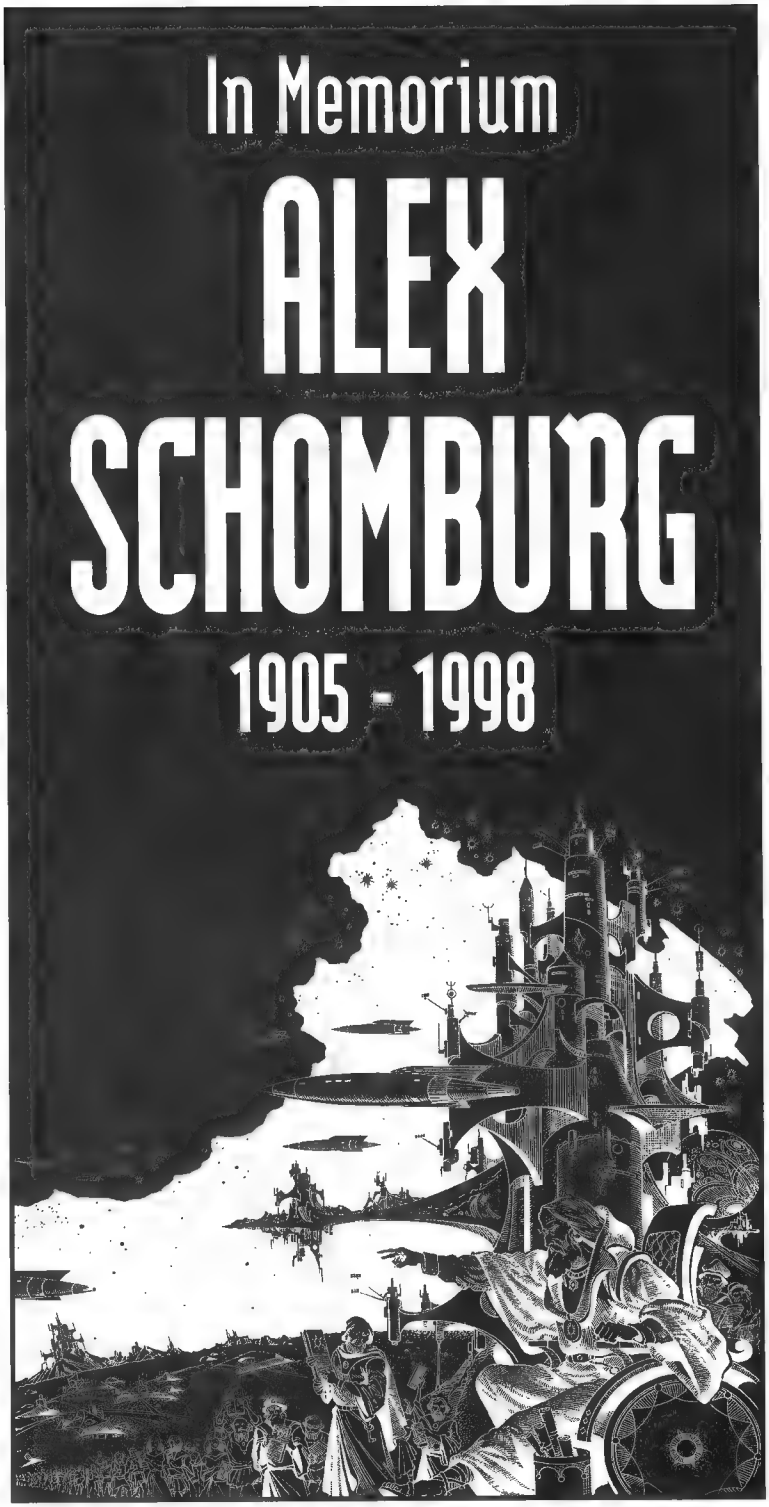
2) Does their relative drop in price in lower grades realistically reflect the demand for these issues?

Thank you for any opinion you'd like to put forth, in regard to these questions. I have been buying your magazine faithfully since issue #41 from my local comic shop (which I will continue to do to support them as a business), and have never seen any articles on Harry Chesler's publications (although your October '97 issue features Punch #12 on the cover). Do you plan any such article, or did I miss one in a previous issue?

Greg Westphal, Massachusetts

1) The Gerber Scarcity Index was Ernie's best estimate of rarity based on interviews with hundreds of collectors at the time the Photo-Journals were published. Since then, even more information has come to light on certain key, high-demand, and scarce issues... including Punch #1-15 (or so) and Dynamic #2-19. These books have always been in relatively short supply, so with the increased demand of the last 5 years they're naturally going to be hard to find... in any grade. (It makes the Mile High copies of these issues just that much more remarkable.) I personally feel that the two books you mention qualify for a higher SI, but that's just based on my limited experience researching the books and my converstaions with a number of the Chesler collectors... who all suggest that they are rarer than the Gerber SI.

2) I feel their relative drop in price in lower grades does realistically reflect the demand for these issues (although I'm sure some will disagree with me). I say this because rarity is one of the determining price factors, but so is demand and condition. However, I also want to say that I have paid as much as 12 times Guide for books that I really want, and to be honest I really don't care who gives me a hard time about it. If you're in the hobby long enough, you consider opinion and data, but ultimately it's for per- *(Continued on page 76)*



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247 FN $950
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1 FN $850

ALL-AMERICAN
30 VG- $295

ALL MEN O'WAR
20 NM- $300

ALL-FLASH
1 FR $850

ALL STAR
1 FR/FR- $750
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25 VG+ $295

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1 VF/VF+ $14,500

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28 VF- $1950
28 G $395
30 VF $1400
30 VF $1300
34 VF+ $2000
34 VF $1200

CAPT. AMERICA
6 NM $5400
11 G/VG $550
28 FN/VF $750
28 G+ $395
28 FR $225
32 FN/VF $750

CHALL. UNKNOWN
18 VF+ $195

DARING MYSTERY
4 VF/NM $2950

DAREDEVIL
1 NM- $2350

DARE/HITLER
1 FR- $750

DETECTIVE
10 FN $2750
35 App. VG $1100
38 App. G/VG . $2750
38 PR $1450
40 FR+ $550
225 VG $1750
227 VF/VF+ $550

DOLL MAN
1 G/VG..... $395

80 PAGE GIANT
8 VF+ $395
9 VF+ $155

FANTASTIC FOUR
1 NM- $24,500
1 VF/VF+ $6750
48 VF+..... $825
Ann. 1 VF+..... $975

FLASH
129 NM $550

FRONTIER FIGHT.
5 NM- $375

FUNNY PICT/STOR.
Vol. 1, #1 FN $1400

G. SIZE X-MEN
1 NM- $450

HAUNT OF FEAR
19 FN Bond. $150

HEROIC
1 VG/FN $400

HOUSE OF MYST.
3 NM $750

INCRED. HULK
1 VF/NM $12,750
1 VF+ $10,500
1 VF/VF+ $8500

JOE PALOOKA
1 VG $140

JO-JO
11 VF Bond. $85
12 VF/NM $450

JLA
1 VF+ $2850
3 VF+ $595
7 VF $230
9 NM- $695
10 VF+ $275
11 VF/NM $210
12 VF+ $180
13 VF+ $185
15 VF/NM $210
15 VF+ $190
17 VF/NM $175
19 VF/NM $175
25 VF/NM $120
29 VF/NM $150

MAD
1 FR $395
2 FR $95

MARVEL MYST.
7 App. VG $275
10 App. G/VG .. $900
13 FR $415
70 VF/NM..... $1275
72 VF/VF- $495

SHOWCASE
4 NM- Mo.Vl. $22,500
8 G/VG $1350
14 VF/NM $4500
22 VF $2975
37 NM- $975
43 NM..... $575
60 NM..... $320

MORE FUN
54 G/VG $1750
93 VF+ $675

MYSTERY MEN
1 FR/G $950

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1 FN $450
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PHANTOM LADY
13 F/VF $2700
17 VF $2900

RULAH
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SGT. FURY
1 VF+ $1350

STRANGE TALES
96 VF $150
97 VF $350
97 FN- $225
98 VF/NM $250
99 VF/NM $250

SUB-MARINER
19 VG+ $295
38 VF $700
40 VF $775

SUPERBOY
1 FR/G $550

TALES/SUSPENSE
28 VF/NM..... $350
33 VF+ $250
34 VF/NM $300
36 VF+ $250

TALES/SUSP. Cont'd
39 NM/M $7500
39 VF+ $3950
39 App. VF+ $2950

TALES OF TERROR
Ann 2 NM $1950
Ann 3 NM- $1500
nn'51 VF/NM $4500

THRILLING
1 App. VG..... $275

THUN'DA
1 FN/VF Fraz. $550

TIP TOP
1 FR $850

TOM MIX
1 PR/FR $225

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9 G/VG Bl. Hood $780

USA
1 FR $775

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1 FR/FR+ L.Fine $375
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WEIRD SCIENCE
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1952 VF/NM ... $1950
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7 FN/VF $750

YOUNG ALLIES
16 VF+ $750

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Fifties Finales

By Pat S. Calhoun

One usually thinks of the late 1950s as the beginning of the Silver Age, but many things ended in that changing comics climate as well. It's ironic that Silver students focus on the "second heroic era," as costumed characters again became the dominant comic book genre, while often failing to take much note of the disappearance of almost everything but the long underwear crowd.

Among the first to fall were two of the science fiction titles that had helped start the Atlas revival. *World Of Fantasy* was one of the titles from the mid-1950's Atlas fantasy expansion, as they took up some of the slack in that genre that the demise of many publishers had created. It was also one of the few titles to continue through the post "implosion" days following a massive distribution crisis. *World Of Fantasy* #19 (August 1959) is the last issue. (*Strange Worlds* #6 was dated the same month and ended that title.) There would be less of an SF emphasis in the four fantasy titles Atlas continued.

The cover is a classic "Kirby monster" prototype. Inside, Don Heck illustrates "The Gargoyle from the Fifth Galaxy," a first contact story we've seen before, but it's compactly told and still enjoyable. "Deluge" is a run-of-the-mill disaster yarn that profits from Steve Ditko's richness of effect in the drawing.

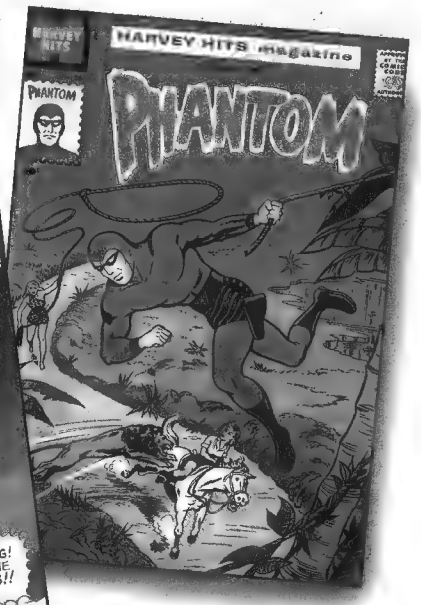
The other memorable story in this ish is "The Iron Hulk," a sentimental robot tale wherein a little boy's automated companion saves the child's life and earns the respect and good-feeling of the father—who had not understood the bond between the boy and the machine. Swelegant rendering by Joe Sinnott makes a good story even better.

The space race had gotten hot with Sputnik's launch in 1957, and this was a big factor in the SF boom that followed and was godfather—at least—to the Silver Age. The happiest result of this surge of four-color fantasy was surely Archie's *Cosmo The Merry Martian*. *Cosmo* #5 (August 1959) was on the stands at the same time as the Atlas book; it's the next-to-last issue and a good example of the zany charm the title offered. Cosmo, Orbi, Astra, and Professor Thimk (plus "two moonlings, one gillywump, and a small dog named Jo-Jo") voyage by rocket to Saturn where they discover that the natives look like vegetables and have names like Cabbage Head, Tomato Face, and Carrot Top.

The story is a complete four-part novel, and the issues in the series are even linked by a loose continuity. Most of the Saturn adventure is taken up with young Orbi's misguided antics: he eats a magic gum drop that makes him shrink to a

(Continued on page 16)

ARCHIE SERIES
COSMO
THE MERRY MARTIAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WILL WE EVER BE ABLE TO LEAVE SATURN, COSMO?
I DON'T KNOW! IT LOOKS BAD!
THAT'S NOTHING! HERE COME THE SATURNIANS!!
HOLD ON TO YOUR ROCKET BELTS WHEN YOU BUY THIS MAGAZINE! WE WON'T GUARANTEE YOUR SAFE RETURN BACK TO THIS WORLD!!



Bob White's art keeps Cosmo The Merry Martian #5 (Aug 1959) moving at a mirthful warp-speed... a humorous and collectible "satire" of ETs and the 1950's space race.

The last few Harvey Phantoms books (like Harvey Hits #26, Nov 1959) stand out as some of the most adult-oriented comics of the Silver Age.

speck and then drifts off into space until he eats another candy and grows giant-sized, trapped out on Saturn's rings.

Order is restored in Chapter Four; the 22 pages whiz by rather irresistibly. Bob White's art is simple yet rewarding; the "Saturnians" are wonderfully whimsical creations. And bizarre as the Cosmo series was, it was sound comic book business: a combination of the two hottest genres of the time—sci-fi and humor.

Although they would last through 1961, newspaper strip reprint comics were fading. *Harvey Hits* #26 (November 1959) packaged up a Phantom daily strip story into a 23-page novel, "The Adventure of the Wild Girl." A young woman from Missouri whose career as an animal trainer ends when the circus she's with folds, moves to the jungle with her pet lion and sets up shop as a bandit. When the Phantom investigates, Dara, the "wild girl," captures him and takes him to her hideaway. She keeps him prisoner there, hoping he'll come around to her idea that they would make a good couple.

To complicate matters—the young man she'd captured earlier is head-over-heels for her, but Dara regards him as a "boy." Her feminine logic resolves that the solution to the triangle is to go out and capture a girlfriend for Jerry. Of course it is Diana Palmer, the Phantom's fiancée, who Dara apprehends and takes to her den. This new triangle leads to a bout between Dara and Diana that's a beaut!

It's not one of the heavier Phantom yarns—there are plenty of those—but it's fun, and the characters are nicely drawn. Lee Falk and Wilson McCoy were handling the strip in grand style; the stories they produced have become worldwide favorites and are constantly reprinted, everywhere but in the good old USA. Harvey did a really fine job on these books, printing the art eight panels per page—big enough to appreciate the pictures but with enough story to keep the narrative drive strong.

The newspaper strips themselves were changing. They were no longer integral to sales and, hence, not so much of a prestige market. Gag-a-day strips were replacing extended adventures so that casual readers wouldn't be left out. But the *Phantom* kept its high quality. Harvey would publish three more *Phantom* issues; and although rarely noted as such, they—and this one—are some of the most adult-oriented comics of the Silver Age.

The late 1950's comics scene still had a hint of the post-War and pre-Code "all ages" approach, but even that was fading as niche marketing triumphed and turned comic books...into kid's stuff.

Pat S. Calhoun lives in Santa Rosa, California and has been collecting, researching and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s.

An early and excellent example of a "Kirby monster" graces the cover of the World Of Fantasy #19 (Aug 1959), the final issue. Many monster covers tried to jump on the sci-fi creature film bandwagon of the 1950s, and many have suggested this one may have been inspired by the Ray Harryhousen's cyclops in the 1958 film The 7th Voyage of Sinbad.

COMING NEXT MONTH IN CBM

Recipient of the 1998 CBM Life Achievement Award

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Human Torch meets Spider-Man!

Wild & Woolly

Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when Western comics won the hearts of young buckeroos!

By Michelle Nolan

With apologies to the Lone Ranger, that's regrettably the sad state of the once-glorious Western comic. But even if you aren't an avid collector of this material, stick around and help me shoot a few holes in some of the conventional "wisdom" about this often-misunderstood and sometimes-maligned genre…and maybe even score a few historical bullseyes to boot!

The subject of Westerns is far more complex than most collectors realize. The saga begins at the beginning of comics…in the Golden Age. Ah, but it wasn't the Golden Age for Westerns. In fact, considering the extremely heavy influence of the genre on movies, pulp magazines and general fiction of the same period, it's amazing how few Western comics were initially produced in the 1933-47 period…and how many were eventually created.

To illustrate this, here are two numbers that will stun you:

- Total number of Western-themed newsstand comic books from 1933-47: 171.
- Total number of Western-themed newsstand comic books from 1948-59: 3,307!

Now I may have miscounted a comic book or two, and there are still a handful I'm not sure exist. But even with this tiny possible error factor, these numbers are statistically stunning.

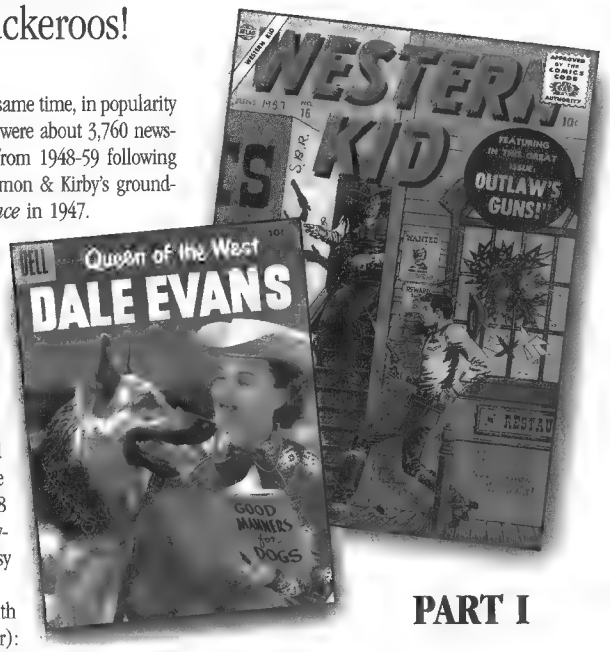
In other words, there were nearly 20 times as many Western comic books produced in the 12-year period of 1948-59 than in the preceding 15-year span, even though the 1933-47 era represented not only the Golden Age of comics but corresponded with the greatest glory the Western has ever known in popular culture.

Western comics rivaled romance comics, which exploded at virtually the same time, in popularity during the 1950s. There were about 3,760 newsstand romance comics from 1948-59 following the first two issues of Simon & Kirby's groundbreaking *Young Romance* in 1947. However, there were many more romance comics still being published in the 1960s than Westerns.

The reasons for the slow growth of the Western over the first 15 years of comic books and the genre's explosive growth beginning in 1948 are no huge mystery, however. In fact, it's fairly easy to explain.

The first reason (with more to follow later): Through the 1940s, the Western was not big in the newspaper comic strips. Perhaps the very pervasiveness of the genre in other media mitigated against its potential popularity in the comic strips, which tended to be devoted to either high adventure ("realistic" such as Dick Tracy or Prince Valiant, or "fantastical," such as Tarzan, Flash Gordon or Superman), human interest, and humor or some combination of the three.

In fact, the three primary reference works devoted to comic strips published before 1960—Martin Sheridan's *Comics And Their Creators* (1942), Colton Waugh's *The Comics* (1947) and Stephen Becker's *Comic Art In American* (1959)—barely mention the Western comic strip. Not until Maurice Horn's *Comics Of The American West* (1975) did we see a good reference to Western comic strips, and then only because the book revealed how obscure most of



PART I

Dale Evans (wife of Roy Rogers) was published successfully by both DC and Dell. In Queen of the West, Dale Evans #11 (Apr/Jun 1956), she teaches her faithful dog, Bullet, a thing or two about manners.

The Western Kid—one of the 12 "Kids from Marvel" in the 1948-57 decade—appears on the marvelous John Severin-drawn cover. This issue (#16, Jun 1957) was published only a few months before the Atlas "implosion" which ended this and more than 50 other titles.

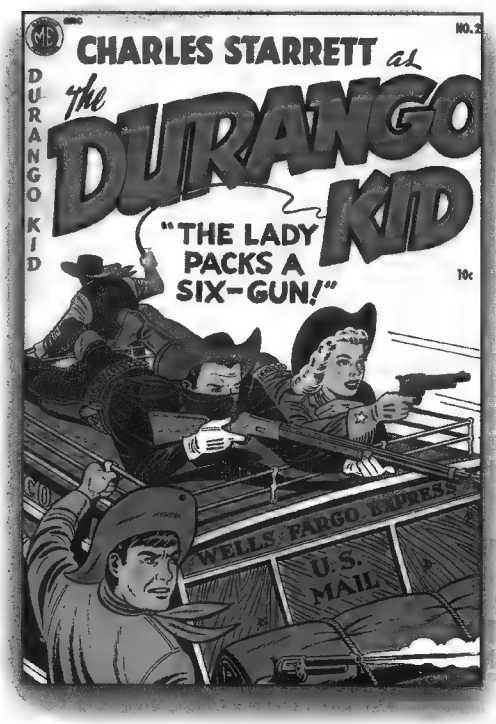
them were. Since then, we've had the informative and entertaining publications of the eminent Western comic historian Bill Black of AC Comics to enjoy.

Sheridan's book doesn't profile any Western strips at all. Becker's tome gives them only the briefest mention. Waugh's work does a little better by them in its chapter entitled "The Strips Called Straight," in which he profiles Way Out West, King of the Royal Mounted, The Long Ranger and Red Ryder. Those four were, in fact, the semi-final early Western comic strips (although the Lone Ranger was first created as a radio character, in 1933).

So it's no coincidence that without an extensive tradition of nationally known comic strip Western heroes to fall back on—and with the international situation both before and during World War II providing the fodder and motivation for all sorts of modern heroics—Western comic books stumbled out of the gate of four-color history.

To be sure, most of the Golden Age anthology comics included a Western character, whether it was a newspaper reprint like Lone Ranger in *King Comics*, an intra-publisher pulp rip-off such as The Rio Kid in Standard's *Thrilling Comics* or an original character such as Firehair in *Rangers Comics*, or Jack Kirby's early characters, The Lone Rider and Wilton of the West.

Fred Guardineer drew both the cover and all three Durango Kid stories in Durango Kid #29 (May/Jun 1954). The famed movie character of Durango Kid was played by Charles Starrett... who starred in his own successful series published by Magazine Enterprises.



However, no Western hero received his own regularly published comic book until *Red Ryder* debuted in 1940 (only to have his second issue delayed nearly a year) and *Gene Autry* followed in 1941.

Before that pair of heroes sprung from the writers of the purple sage, Centaur Comics (and its predecessor) published the first Western comic. It was a largely humorous affair called *Star Ranger Comics*, which ran 20 issues in two volumes from 1937-39 (#13 and 14 were entitled *Cowboy Comics* before Centaur returned to the original title). These are largely of interest only to historians of obscure comics and the early work of Golden Age artists, for they produced no enduring or endearing characters (my opinion, of course).

Western Picture Stories, a four-issue series that debuted in February 1937 from the early publisher The Comics Magazine Company, actually ties with *Star Ranger* as the first Western comic. There was also a Dell one-shot (in April 1937) entitled *Western Action Thrillers*.

However, other than *Red Ryder* and *Gene Autry*, no other Western comics were published regularly through 1941. There were two Lone Ranger comics and one each of King Of The Royal Mounted and Red Eagle (the first Indian comic) in the *Feature Book* series; there were two Broncho Bill Comics in the *Single Series* title, taken from the newspaper strips; and there were two Lone Ranger issues and one for King Of The Royal Mounted in the *Large Feature Comics* series.

There is a mysterious (and possibly mythical) Fawcett title called *Western Desperado Comics*, supposedly a one-shot (#8) that followed the defunct seven-issue run of *Slam-Bang Comics* in 1940. I could swear I remember seeing one of these at a convention about 20 years ago, but haven't seen one since and I don't know anyone else who has.

Among other early Western comic efforts, Classic Comics produced five Western-themed issues in the series' first seven years (1941-47); Fawcett Comics published six scattered issues from 1942-47 of *Golden Arrow*, the firm's unique Western hero from its best-selling *Whiz Comics*; Bernard Baily managed the one-shot *Cisco Kid* in 1944; and Avon published *Cowpuncher* #1 in 1947 (the series ran irregularly for seven issues through 1949).

Whoa, there, you say. Aren't we forgetting the hugely popular *Hopalong Cassidy* from Fawcett and Dell's *Lone Ranger* and *Roy Rogers*, in addition to the aforementioned *Gene Autry* and *Red Ryder*? No, not by a long shot of one of the Lone Ranger's silver bullets.

Amazingly, however, even all five of those Western favorites—all of which ultimately ran more than 100 issues—staggered at their comic book starts. For example, *Red Ryder* #1 (September 1940) was published by the obscure firm of Hawley, only to see #2 emerge from the same minor firm as the non-Western *Hi-Spot Comics*. It took nearly a year for the character to resume in comic books in the first issue from Dell (#3, August 1941). But perhaps this wasn't so surprising, since Red Ryder was a fairly new character, created by Fred Harman for the nation's newspaper comic pages in 1939.

Gene Autry, the singing cowboy who was rated the nation's most profitable Western box-office attraction from 1937-42 by *Motion Picture Herald* magazine, moved into his own Fawcett comic book for 10 issues from 1941 to 1943 before Dell took over with issues #11 and 12. *Gene Autry* then dropped into Dell's *Four Color* series for seven issues before again emerging with his own title, in 1946.

Hopalong Cassidy has also had a rough early ride. Fawcett published his first issue in 1943, yet #2 didn't appear until 1946.

The Lone Ranger's appearances in comics were also staggered, and this despite being the most popular of all radio Western characters. Once Dell acquired the comic book rights from King Features Syndicate in 1944, the Lone Ranger didn't appear in his own series until 1948. From 1944-47, they were asking "Who Was That Masked Man?" in seven issues of the *Four Color* series.

As for Roy Rogers (who became even more permanently etched in the nation's consciousness as a singing cowboy)... he succeeded Gene Autry as the No. 1 Western box office moneymaker from 1943-54, when the survey ended because the theatrical series B Western had been killed off by television. Yet even Roy Rogers needed four years to get his own comic book in 1948, preceded by 13 appearances in the *Four Color* series.

Roy's debut in *Four Color* #38 (1944) marked the first photo-cover in comics. The idea didn't exactly get a galloping start, but once it caught on near the end of the decade, there was a veritable photo-cover stampede by Fawcett and Dell, with a handful from the other publishers such as DC and Charlton. Fawcett, of course, went out of the comic book business with issues dated January 1954, but Dell continued the photo-cover tradition well into the 1960s, although switching primarily to television heroes beginning in the mid-1950s after the movie series-Western expired.

At any rate, even after such erratic starts, all five of these long-running Western worthies enjoyed immensely profitable and colorful careers in comic books, with all but *Hopalong Cassidy* published by Dell.

Red Ryder lasted until #151 in 1957 (followed by one *Four Color* issue), for a run of 150 Dell issues; *Gene Autry* lasted 121 issues through 1959; both *Roy Rogers* and *The Lone Ranger* had 145 issues through 1961; and *Hoppy* appeared in 135 issues from Fawcett and DC, with the final 50 DC issues (#86-135) published after Fawcett's final comic books.

More reasons for the extended success of these five immortals: television exposure either in original shows or movie reruns, and the Baby Boom generation's thirst for all things Western. Not to mention the fact that the creation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954 actually helped such universally known and virtuous characters to achieve even greater public approval on all levels.

The other reason: the gold rush in Western comics, beginning in 1948 (at almost the exact same time that the genres of romance, teen humor, crime and horror were beginning to take off as well in place of the multitude of defunct superheroes). Westerns, however, beat them all to the newsstand draw with regard to a title explosion in 1948.

In that year, there were no fewer than 45 new Western titles, followed by 18 in 1949, 56 in 1950, 28 in 1951, 17 in 1952, 19 in 1953 and 26 in 1954 (and this doesn't count the Western romance titles, which more properly should be counted under romance). Of those 209 titles, only 41 were one-shots (mostly from Avon). I counted a few interrupted titles twice, but I did not count a new Western comics that changed title slightly but not theme. Obviously, however, when a comic switched from one genre to another (e.g. from the superhero *All-Star Comics* to *All-Star Western*), it represented a title change since the publisher was gambling on better sales from the new genre.

There were 93 more Western titles introduced in 1955-59, but most of these were either Dell television adaptations or comics from Charlton, which emerged as the last remaining big publisher of Westerns in the 1960s.

By 1966, however, the status of the Western in comics had once again sunk so low that only 79 of the 1,529 newsstand comics published that year had Western themes, according to figures prepared by Southern California indexer Dan Stevenson (who, along with Howard Keltner of Texas, did the original research that made possible much of the statistical data for this column).

Think how long ago 1966 is, and you'll see how far removed we are from the popularity of the Western, notwithstanding the occasional modern character such as Jonah Hex. In fact, at 32 years removed from 1966, we're now as far removed from that year—the year of the Batman television craze—as fans of that period were removed from the year of the first newsstand comics, published in 1934!

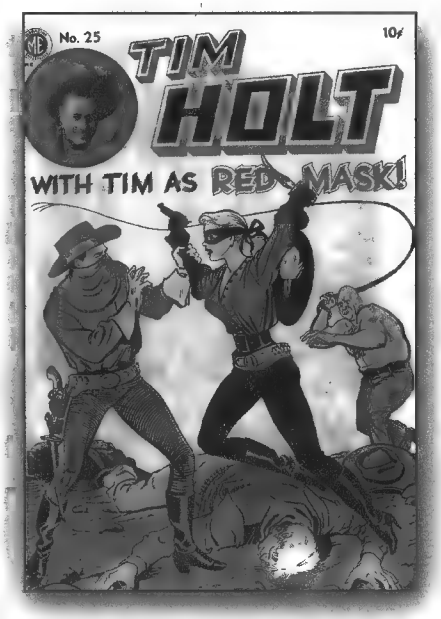
The Western, of course, was a staple of the dime novels in the last 40 years of the 19th century, before the West had even been completely settled. And the Western was just as much a staple of American culture through the 1950s, what with many Americans, young and old, who had a direct connection to the Old West through a parent, a grandparent—or even themselves.

Forty years ago, as a 10-year-old, I can remember talking with old-timers—friends of my grandparents, who were born late in the 19th century—who had personal memories of the Old West, or who at least had family memories passed down by their parents. My grandfather used to tell me stories of his father (my great-grandfather), who fought for General Lee in the Civil War! My great-grandfather then migrated West.

These kind of generational memories, though, usually don't belong to the current young generation. Many people today under 20 years old don't even have grandparents who were alive before World War II, much less during the Old West!

At times, then, I'm still puzzled *(Continued on page 54)*

An unusual step for a comic publisher, ME changed Tim Holt (famed Western actor) into the Red Mask. Tim Holt #25 (Aug/Sep 1951) features the first appearance of the female villain The Black Phantom.



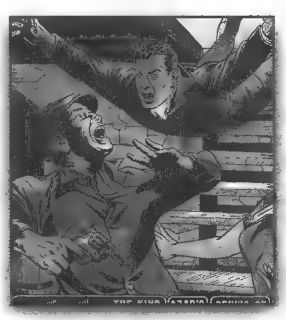
Total number of Western-themed newsstand comic books from 1933-47
—171!

Total number of Western-themed newsstand comic books from 1948-59
—3,307!

"HAWKAAAA!"

Fantasti Mad M and Evil

As many *CBM* readers are no doubt aware, Blackhawk was originally created by Will Eisner and Charles Cuidera and first appeared in *Military Comics* #1 (August 1941). After a period of evolution, the Blackhawks soon developed into the team they would remain through the next few decades: a multinational septet, organized as a paramilitary group, dedicated to fighting totalitarian oppression throughout the world. Blackhawk himself (originally a Pole but later changed to an American) was a cold-eyed, fearless Tyrone Power type, irresistible to the myriad of fair (or not-so-fair) ladies that populated his adventures. His companions were the American Chuck; the Frenchman Andre; the Swede Olaf; the Polish Stanislaus; the German (originally Dutch) Hendrickson; and the Chinese Chop Chop. They wore military-style visored caps, brass-buttoned tunics, riding pants and boots. Blackhawk even indulged himself with a stylized hawk emblem and yellow aviator scarf. The Blackhawks were barracked on Blackhawk Island, which was shuttled over the years from the



c Fiends, achines Schemes

Reed Crandall's pre-Code Blackhawks battled vicious villains and sultry sirens, with conquest on their minds and evil in their hearts!

by **TONY GLEESON**

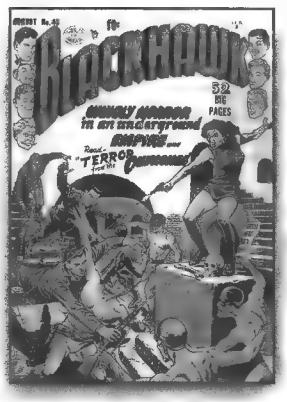
North Atlantic to the Pacific, from which they flew at a moment's notice in their hot planes to battle tyranny throughout the world.

The Blackhawks were clearly a creation of 1940's America. During the decade after WWII and well into the 1950s, the stories would reflect not only the positive attributes of patriotism, courage, and honor... but also a darker view of the American dream, including racism, nationalistic chauvinism, and sexism! Certainly the characterization of Chop Chop, the pigeon English-talking, rotund, and severely stereotyped Chinese Blackhawk (who

never got to wear that cool blue uniform), would never be accepted in today's society; it's uncomfortable even in the context of historical examination, to look at this character. Much like Will Eisner's character Ebony of the same period, Chop Chop reflected a condescendingly affectionate—and simultaneously ignorant—attitude toward these ethnic groups. They were portrayed using fractured ethnic dialects, exhibiting childlike innocence, all the while doting on the "great white hero" who headed up the team. Even so, these characters were imbued with courage and inner strength and often saved the day by story's end! Perhaps the ethnic characterizations in these comics, as embarrassing as they are, were as much a reflection of a well-meaning 1940's sentiment as much as they were socially damaging, inasmuch as they allowed the stereotyped characters to be heroes too!

Nefarious Megalomaniacs

After the Second World War, the Blackhawks turned their attentions to other criminals and oppressors besides the now-vanquished Axis. There seemed to be an endless supply of nefarious megalomaniacs (with their own private armies) in the world of the Blackhawks, as well as alluring young women with secret evil in their hearts. And only the noble Hawks, of course, stood between them and the world they lusted to conquer! That world differed from a lot of other comic book universes: even though it was populated with fantastic fiends, machines and schemes, it somehow seemed more like the real world we all lived in. Usually the menace was human in origin. The stories dealt with human greed for power and wealth and the political tensions between East and West that had begun to command the world's consciousness. Almost all of the Blackhawks' adventures took place in exotic foreign locales: North Africa, the South Seas, the Middle East, and countless tiny mythical Eastern European countries with names like Brovina, Bargovia, and Vandia. The Blackhawks were not exclusively American heroes and they did not defend strictly American interests: they were a multi-ethnic, multi-national commando strike force, ready and able to strike the enemies of international democracy (especially Communists) anywhere in the world!



The Blackhawks flew real (although offbeat) planes: first Grumman F5F prop planes during the war, then they briefly adopted F80 jets. But what is best remembered are their distinctive trademark F90s in their "glory days." Nearly every issue's lead story would end with a panel of the Hawks screaming by in their needle-nosed fighters, singing still another verse of their victory song. Generally the lyrics boasted of how no power could whip them because... "We're Blackhawks!" Muhammad Ali had nothing on these guys, believe me! (Occasionally the tale would end with the boys raising beer mugs in a victory toast.)

And then there were the apocalyptic fist fights! Stories were filled with blazing air battles, gunfights, seduction by pretty women including prime ministers, research scientists, or international spies…and all dressed in slinky cocktail dresses! Even when captured by overwhelming numbers, the reader could always count on the Blackhawks arising at the challenge, hollering their battle cry "Hawkaaaa!" Every issue saw the famous team slugging their way to victory—no matter how outnumbered or outgunned—grinning and wisecracking in their various accents as they went!

Some have suggested that the very best period of Blackhawk stories began in 1951 with the issues numbered in the forties. The Korean War filled the news and anti-Communist feelings ran high. The creativity level shown in the title was exhiliaratingly high. The artwork, especially that of Reed Crandall, took a quantum leap in quality. *(Continued on page 50)*

I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE! BUT I'LL GET YOU YET!
LOOK OUT...!
SACRE MONDE! ZERE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH LEFT EVEN TO IDENTIFY!
IT'S PROBABLY BETTER! BROVINA CAN IDENTIFY THE HUNTING PACK MOB AND DEAL WITH THEM UNDER A DECENT, HONEST GOVERNMENT! OUR JOB IS DONE!
WHEN KILLERS STALK OUR LOYAL BAND WE LEAD THEM ON, THEN MAKE OUR STAND! WE'RE BLACKHAWKS!

Here it is--the First

Blackhawk Motion Picture

All BLACKHAWK fans will be thrilled by the daring exploits of their favorite comic book heroes in the new 15 installment Columbia Super-Serial. See the famous fighting team in action at your neighborhood movie house.

BLACKHAWK

Fearless Champion of Freedom

starring

KIRK ALYN

with

Carol Forman

Written for the Screen by

GEORGE H. PLYMPTON, ROYAL K. COLE, SHERMAN L. LOWE

Produced by
SAM KATZMAN

Directed by
SPENCER BENNETT and
FRED F. SEARS

A COLUMBIA SUPER-SERIAL

Check for the release date of the first episode of BLACKHAWK with your local movie theatre manager. If BLACKHAWK has not been scheduled, ask him to book it from COLUMBIA PICTURES CORPORATION right away.

"See the famous fighting team in action at your neighborhood movie house." So stated the house ad published in many Fiction House titles promoting the Columbia15-part Blackhawk serial.

"What happens when a huge idol rises from his centuries-old tomb? Don't miss—The Golden Mummy!" in **Blackhawk** #53 (Jun '52).

PLANET WASN'T THE BIGGEST SELLER FOR FICTION HOUSE, NOR ITS LONGEST RUNNING PUBLICATION. YET THE BIMONTHLY TITLE STAYED ON THE STANDS FOR 13 YEARS!

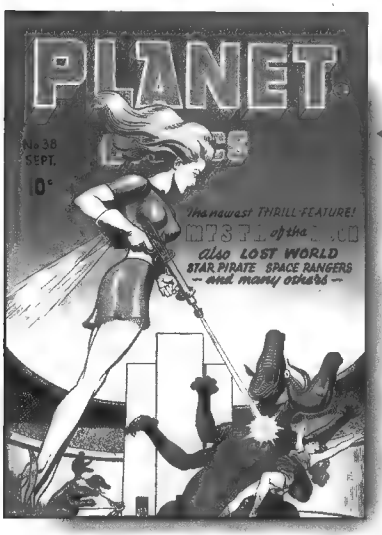
Nonetheless, it is the best-remembered title from Fiction House today. Mainly, due to one reason: *Planet Comics* was the first successful science-fiction title in comics!

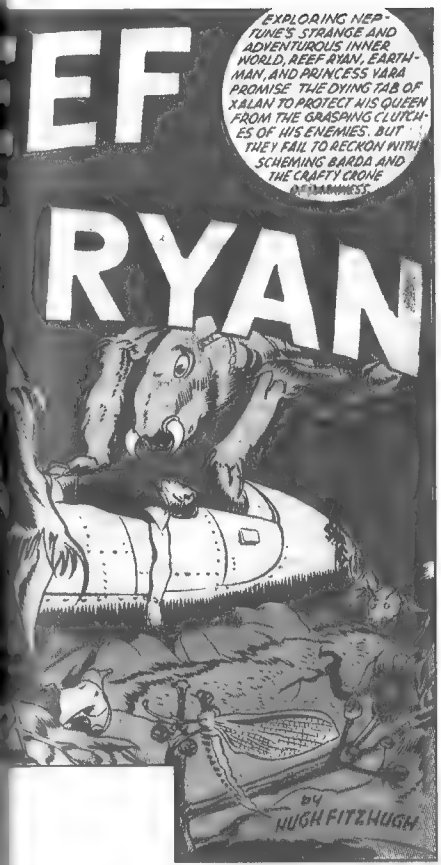
Admittedly, the SF in *Planet* wasn't anything to give readers of *Astounding* or *Amazing* pause. It was more the babe-and-BEM type of adventure, with lots of sexy, bikini-clad heroines and villainesses populating the pages... kind of a Baywatch in space. On the other hand, such themes have never lost circulation for comics, or much of any other publication, for that matter.

Even some of the female comics fans who were there at the time have commented favorably about Fiction House's portrayal of women. Mysta of the Moon, Gale Allen, and Lyssa of "Lost World" didn't stand shivering in their swimsuits to be rescued by the nearest handsome clone of Flash Gordon. They piloted the spaceships, zapped the ray-guns, and were as good at bringing in the baddies—or wasting them—as the men. And, since *Planet*'s male heroes weren't lacking in the beefcake department (Hunt Bowman, Star Pirate, Auro, etc.), the girls probably didn't complain much about that, either.

No, *Planet Comics* was neither *Weird Science* nor *Strange Adventures*. But, if you were a kid looking for some rip-roaring adventure among the planets, *Planet* was a good place to land.

To begin: Fiction House's comics were outgrowths of their pulps, for the most part. This was probably the reason why they were so low on superheroes. (Of those, there was Lightning in *Jumbo*, Red Comet in *Planet*, and Red Panther in *Jungle*, and that's about it.) Their strategy was simply not to compete with the other houses by putting out superhero comics. Instead, they concentrated on genres, and *Wings Stories*, *Planet Stories*, and *Jungle* Stories spawned *Wings Comics*, *Planet Comics*, and *Jungle Comics*. Both comics and pulps plugged each other frequently in their ads. Their lead heroes or heroines were dashing aviators, powerful jungle lords and ladies, and mighty space-opera stars, and it worked. Most Fiction House anthology titles lasted for over 100 issues apiece, and a few characters such as Sheena, Wambi, and Käanga




EF
RYAN
EXPLORING NEPTUNE'S STRANGE AND ADVENTUROUS INNER WORLD, REEF RYAN, EARTHMAN, AND PRINCESS VARA PROMISE THE DYING TAB OF XALAN TO PROTECT HIS QUEEN FROM THE GRASPING CLUTCHES OF HIS ENEMIES. BUT THEY FAIL TO RECKON WITH SCHEMING BARDA AND THE CRAFTY CRONE
by HUGH FITZHUGH

ON OTHER WORLDS NETICS of the Future

By Lou Mougin

earned their own titles for a time. (Sheena even got her own ephemeral pulp, as a reward for meritorious service in the comics, and spawned that Irish McCalla TV series in the early '50s and the Tanya Roberts movie in the '80s.)

Planet Stories was a respectable SF pulp, publishing the likes of Ray Bradbury, Poul Anderson, A. E. Van Vogt, and others. Like many pulps of the time, they featured beautiful women in scanty costumes on the cover. (Like as not, they complemented their bathing suits with a space helmet.) For a while, *Planet Comics* went for straight SF scenes on their covers. By issue #13, Fiction House threw up their hands and required that every cover from then on had to have a beautiful woman in an action scene… and every cover from then on did!

Like many early Fiction House covers, *Planet Comics* #1 (January 1940) was by drawn by Will Eisner and Lou Fine. Eisner apparently wasn't exactly at home doing science fiction art, and it showed. But at least he'd given it a damn good try. The logo "*Planet Comics*" rose against a black background, with the arcing "PLANET" lettering riddled with steel rivets, probably to suggest the metal plating of a spaceship. A shoutline above the logo promised "Weird Adventures on Other Worlds—The Universe of the Future." In the cover scene, a steely-jawed Flash Gordon-type hero knelt on the wing on his red metal spaceship, held a power rod of some sort in his left hand, and, with the ray-gun in his right, dealt out deadly blasts to an army of one-eyed, fanged, clawed green monster-aliens who were streaming in a kind of conga line from an alien city below the logo. A girl in space helmet and tights was almost inside the door, but her arm was grabbed tightly by one of the green grotties, and the three fangs in his mouth (two on the top, one on the bottom) suggested that he wanted her for an hors d'oeuvre. A cutline below the spaceship wing identified this as a scene from "Flint Baker and the One-Eyed Monsters of Mars." Other features were listed: Spurt Hammond—Planet Flyer, Auro—Lord of Jupiter, Capt. Nelson Cole, and The Red Comet—Planet Ranger.

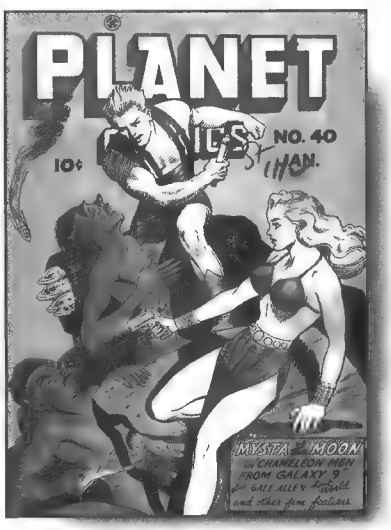
A nation raised on Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers comic strips was apparently ready for the same stuff in an original comic book.

Only… it wasn't *quite* the same stuff.

Well, who can blame 'em? Alex Raymond and Dick Calkins weren't working for comics shops. Publisher Thurman Scott, editor Malcolm Reiss, art director Eisner and feature editor "Busy" Iger did the best they could with what they had… and, for 1940, it wasn't too bad.

"The Planetary Adventures of Flint Baker" commenced on page one, written and drawn by Dick Briefer of *Frankenstein* fame. No human being was to be seen on the splash page; it depicts a big cannon and the huge, gear-driven aiming mechanism around it, and, apparently, an unseen spaceship to be shot from its mouth. A caption read, "When Fletcher Baker's scientist father died, Fletcher was left with the task of completing his rocket ship to be sent to Mars. Now it is finished, and ready for magic flight!"

Fiction House's main gimmick in its genre



titles was to see how many different riffs they could play on that genre. *Auro, Lord of Jupiter*, the next strip, was another such riff: Tarzan of the Planets.

After an opening in which Auro raged atop a crag holding two men aloft and helpless—one in each hand—we dropped back for an origin story. "Early in the twenty-first century," read a caption, "a cruise ship streaked through the heavens, somewhere between Uranus and Jupiter!" The spacecraft looked as much like a pickup truck as a spacecraft can look.

This version of Jupiter didn't have the gravity that would turn the boy into currant jelly, or the noxious atmosphere that would have poisoned him like cyanide. On the other hand, this was 1940—really, late 1939. About all we knew about Jupiter then was that it was out there, it was big, and we'd given it a name. This Jupiter was like a jungle veldt, and the boy was found by a Jovia sabre-toothed tiger and brought up by her, like Mowgli or Tarzan.

Auro eventually developed into a pretty decent strip, and its initial run ended with #29.

After that, we got another riff: a superhero in space, *The Red Comet*.

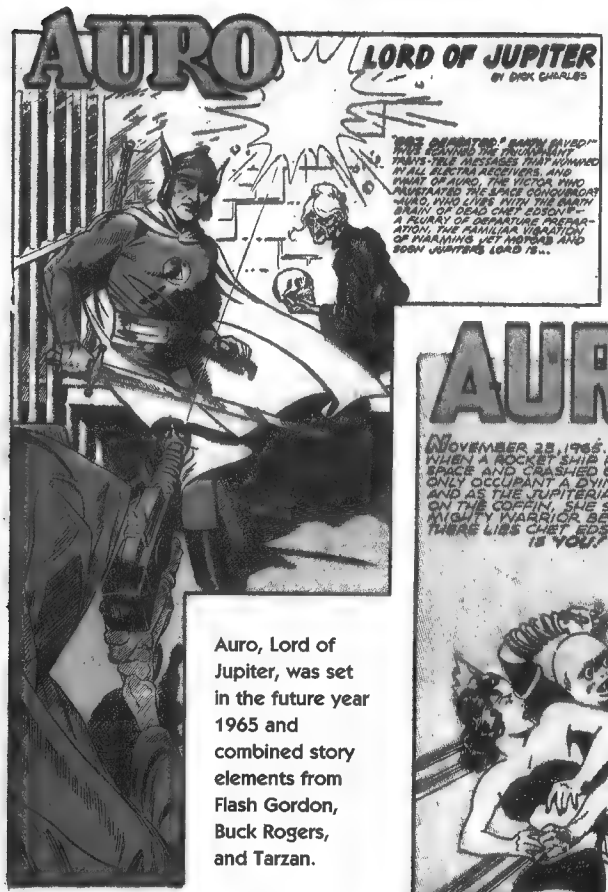
The truncated splash panel showed us a red, comet-like spaceship "Hurtling through space with the speed of light (186,000 miles a second)" and assured us that "The Red Comet, mystery man of the universe, is out scouting for some new adventure…." A rocket full of Earth men landed on a "strange planet" in the "Valley of the Spiderpeople" and got caught in a steel web. The spiderpeople, who had two human limbs and six spidery ones, looked like the eight-limbed Peter Parker from *Amazing Spider-Man* #100-102, and clambered out of their caves to ensnare and abduct the Earthlings.

"Meanwhile, having traveled over 22,000,000 miles in only two minutes [the writer seemed to have a thing about light speed, but unless he traveled faster than that, the Red Comet would be at a virtual standstill in deep space], the Comet arrives on the scene!" The hero, clad in a kind of blue athletic suit and hood with a red cape, used his Intra-Atomic Space Adjuster to turn himself into a giant, ripped up the spiderpeople's steel nets, grabbed his own rocket and the explorers' craft. Then he returned to normal size, had a fight with a spider-sentry at a cave's entrance, and tied all the guy's limbs up. "The Earthmen need me… pronto!" I guess *Planet* readers did too.

Next up was *Captain Nelson Cole of the Solar Force*, by Alex Blum (aka "Alex Boon"). Blum, a classically-inclined illustrator and mainstay of the Eisner shop, had a way to go in his comics development at the time he turned out this one, but it was okay. Captain Cole was a symbolic giant on the splash page, tromping across a future city like a Goliath, and firing his big-coiled ray-gun.

After some really wild adventures in space, Cole, his men, and a group of "liberated zombies" return to Earth. Cole gets a reward from the president as a crowd of admirers below wave their hankies. Captain Nelson Cole appeared through issue #14.

Up next came a quite decently drawn strip. Henry Kiefer illustrated this



AURO
LORD OF JUPITER
By DICK CHARLES
NOVEMBER 23, 1965. THE RATEFUL DAY WHEN A ROCKET SHIP HURTLED OUT OF SPACE AND CRASHED ON JUPITER. IT'S ONLY OCCUPANT, A DYING EARTHMAN AND AS THE JUPITERIANS' QUEEN LOOKED ON THE COFFIN, SHE SPOKE TO THE MIGHTY WARRIOR BESIDES HER. "LOOK, THERE LIES CHET EDSON. THAT MAN IS YOU."
YES.. BUT THEN, WHOSE BODY IS THIS I'M IN?
AURO'S, THE ONCE MIGHTY LORD OF JUPITER. HE WAS PLOTTING THE RECONQUEST OF OUR FORMER LANDS WHEN HE WAS KILLED.

Auro, Lord of Jupiter, was set in the future year 1965 and combined story elements from Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, and Tarzan.

one, *Spurt Hammond, Planet Flyer*. There are only so many decent variations on the name "Flash Gordon," and this was not one of them. We certainly hope he didn't get his nickname from his girlfriend.

This strip looked like a forerunner of the *Planet Comics* to be; it had bitchy villainesses in weird costumes. The opening caption told us, "There is a war on the Moon, which is overrun

SPURT HAMMOND
By Orson Herr
"INTERPLANETARY PILOT SPURT HAMMOND OPERATES A ROCKET SHIP BETWEEN EARTH AND THE PLANETS... ONE DAY, SEETHING FLAMES SHOOT INTO THE SKY. VENUS IS BURNING!"

Early Planet heroes included Spurt Hammond, Planet Flyer, & Captain Cole of the Solar Force.

by war lords, much the same as in present day China. The polar region of the moon (!) is inhabited by Lunerzons, fierce women warriors, who want to rule it... The Lunerzons plan to rob the interplanetary transports...."

We got a shot of two of the Lunerzons, or fierce women warriors, dressed like Asian temple dancers. After that, Spurt eavesdrops and hears the fierce women warriors plot to destroy the Earth.

Eventually the two-headed Lunerzons give up, simultaneously decide to marry him, and end up in a cat fight (could I make this up?). Spurt expended his force (farce?) through the first twelve issues of *Planet*, and then flacidly faded into comic book history.

Buzz Crandall of the Space Patrol was another inductee in *Planet* #1, but was only allotted four pages. Buzz was a troubleshooting Earthman wearing a space helmet and swimming trunks and ran for an amazing 14 issues. His page count eventually increased to nine at one point, and was drawn by artists such as Gene Fawcette, Charlie Sultan, and Henry Fletcher. In *Planet* #1, Buzz fought a horde of "shark-men" who looked like big, upright grasshoppers.

Following Buzz Crandall, was a strip about a villain: Quorak, Super Pirate, The Man Who Stole a World! This one ran for 12 pages in its one and only installment, and concerned itself with a bald, mad scientist on the planetoid Spectremus who was out to conquer Pluto, "greatest of known planets." A hero named Lt. Blake and a heroine named Miss Perry, both of Earth, saved the Plutonians from freezing to death. (If Quorak could freeze Plutonians to death, he had to have been some incredible scientist!) In the end, Spectremus and, apparently, Quorak, were blown to bits, and Pluto returned to its normal orbit.

So went *Planet Comics* #1.

Now that we've shot fish in a barrel (possibly with ray guns) it should be noted that it is easy to fault Golden Age comics in the light of later developments. But, in a way, that's criticizing the Stanley Steamer for not being a Maserati. *Planet Comics* was the first original science fiction comic book in America. It was shop product, done by writers and artists who were still, in 1939, trying to discover what made an adventure comic book really work. It was primitive. But without the cave paintings of Torremolinos, we couldn't have progressed to the masterpieces in the Louvre.

And, even though *Planet Comics* never rose to the heights of a Schwartz of Feldstein comic, it did get better. *Planet* was followed, a few months later, by *Superworld* and *Rocket Comics* from rival *(Continued on page 60)*

CAPTAIN COLE
Nelson
OF THE —
SOLAR FORCE
By Beckman Terrill
A BRAZEN RAID ON THE TREASURY BY AMAZING MIDGETS FROM AN UNEXPLORED SECTION OF THE PLANET, RESULTED IN THE THEFT OF ALL THE GOLD ON MARS. NELSON COLE WAS BEEN CALLED TO APPREHEND THE CRIMINALS!

R. Crandall

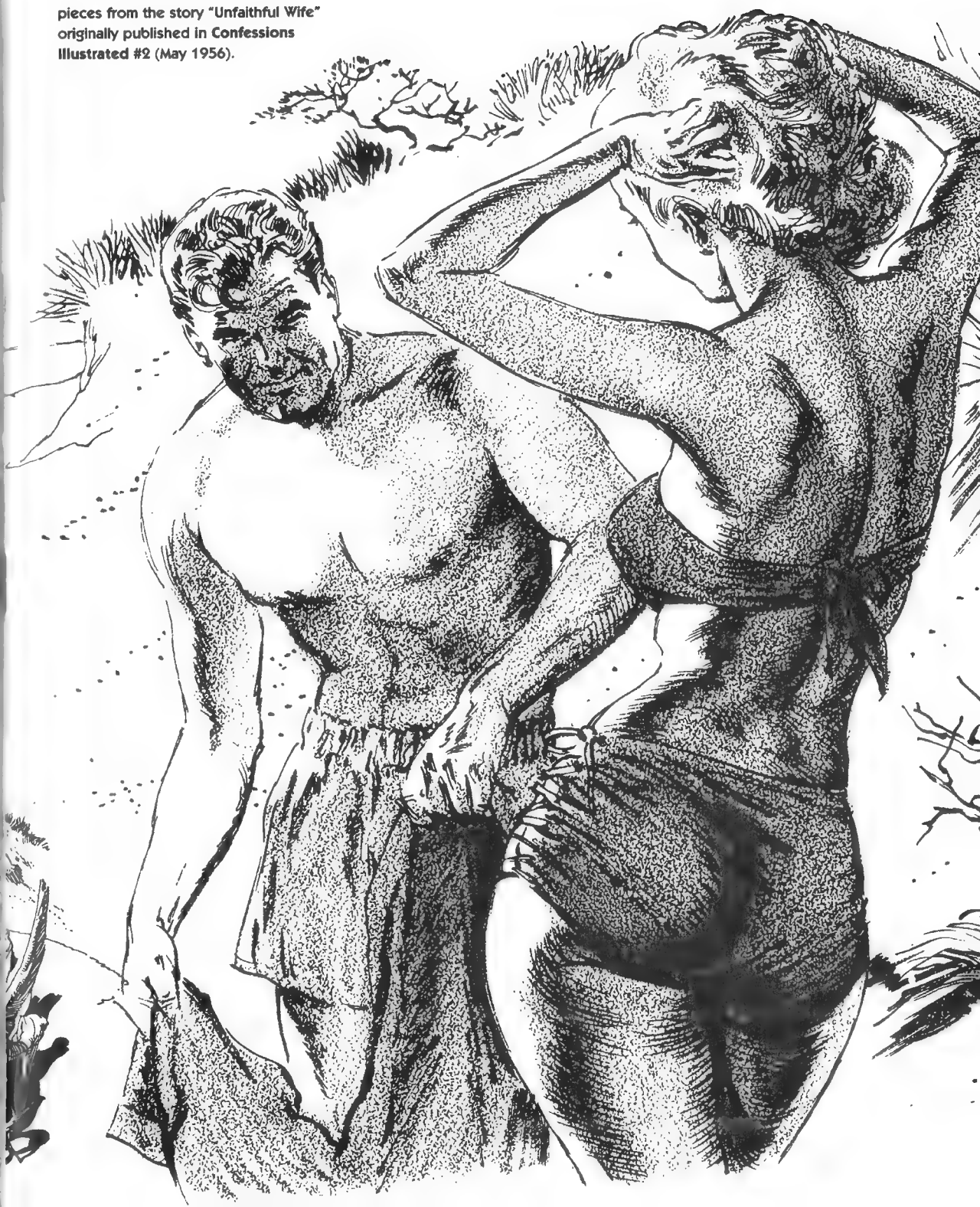
By Roger Hill

Self caricature by Reed Crandall.

REED CRANDALL WAS BORN ON FEBRUARY 22, 1917, in Winslow, Indiana. He began drawing at the age of four—even before he could make sentences—astounding his parents and relatives with a natural talent they were not aware of. This natural ability with art would flourish and grow extensively over the coming years. His influences while growing up were many and included great illustrators such as Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, J.C. Lyendecker, James Montgomery Flagg, and Norman Rockwell. In 1932 the Crandall family moved to Newton, Kansas, where Reed started his freshman year at Newton High School. Upon graduation in 1935 he was awarded a four-year scholarship to the Cleveland School of Art. Before leaving Newton, the already accomplished 18 year-old Crandall was given his first public exhibition at Newton High, where the entire town turned out to see his work. According to a write-up in the local newspaper, the exhibition featured "31 canvases hung on the art studio walls, including water colors, black and white crayons, and oils in portraits, still life, scenery, Indian life and animal life. He also had a dozen pieces of sculpturing, around which a crowd was gathered throughout the entire evening."

Four years later (in June of 1939) the young Reed Crandall graduated from the Cleveland School of Art, and was awarded a $400 cash prize for being voted "the best illustrator in the school." Shortly after, he found a job with the NEA Syndicate in Cleveland and for the next year worked as an editorial cartoonist. Even before graduating Reed had been offered the job of providing illustrations for a hardcover book to be published in New York in June, 1939. It has been reported that Reed eventually headed to New York in lieu of an illustrator's position with a leading book publishing company, but shortly after arriving, left the company and began working for the Eisner and Iger comic shop in late 1940. It was also right around this same time period that Reed penciled the lead story in *Captain America Comics* #2, dated April 1941, for Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Two Crandall brush and ink masterpieces from the story "Unfaithful Wife" originally published in **Confessions Illustrated** #2 (May 1956).



R. Crandall

CRANDALL AT QUALITY

At Eisner and Iger, Reed took on a number of different jobs. While Lou Fine was generally considered the number one top talent in the Iger shop during these early years, Crandall soon carved out his own niche as one of the company's most prolific and versatile artists... working on such features as Hercules,

When Crandall inked his own pencils—the final product was perfection as illustrated by this Doll Man panel from Feature #56 (May 1942). The Ray by Crandall from Smash #36 (Oct 1942).

Firebrand, The Ray, Uncle Sam, Stormy Foster, Doll Man, Kayo Kirby, Blackhawk and many others. As Jim Steranko so capably put it in the second volume of his *History Of The Comics*: "Crandall's approach to comics was that of an illustrator, not a cartoonist. If his drawings lacked the stylized power of Meskin or Kane, he made up for it ten times over with his unerring craftsmanship. His figures had weight which was always accurately distributed in whatever sitting, standing or kneeling position he chose to place them. That trick alone elevated him into a position of esteem among his peers." At one point, it became a problem when Crandall would deliver his finished pages to the Iger shop, because most of the other artists would stop what they were doing to look over the new arrivals. Since this caused a work interruption, Iger eventually had to tell Reed not to come to the office with the art.

After Will Eisner split from Jerry Iger in the Summer of 1941, Everett M. "Busy" Arnold—publisher of Quality Comics—helped set Eisner up in a new larger "shop" studio located in a Manhattan high-rise complex known as the Woodstock Tower in Tudor City (see *CBM* #38 & 39). Arnold quietly hired away most of the top talents from Iger to now work specifically on the Quality Comics features, under the art and editorial direction of Will Eisner. These talented artists included such men as Tex Blaisdell, Charles Cuidera,

Lou Fine, Alex Kotzky, Bob Powell, Nick Viscardi (Cardy), Bill Williams and Reed Crandall. While Lou Fine now enjoyed an office studio of his own, Reed still did most of his work at home, occasionally working at the studio.

In early 1942, after Eisner left for military duty at the outset of World War II, Crandall and the other remaining artists were relocated to the new studios on Lexington Avenue. It was here that Reed would begin working on the "Blackhawk" feature for *Military Comics*, beginning with issue #12 (October 1942). While much of Reed's early work had so far concentrated mostly on superheroes, "Blackhawk" was a military strip, with grim, mercenary characters who had a vigilante-like method of administering out justice to their fascist enemies. With Crandall's fine-line delineation of anatomy and airplanes, and writer Bill Woolfolk's fast-paced scripts, the Blackhawks (comprised of a group of seven men of different nationalities) became one of the most popular military comic features ever produced.

Another character that Crandall worked on at Quality during this period and is the much-remembered character, Doll Man. This five inch-high superhero in blue uniform and red cape was created by Will Eisner in 1939 and appeared regularly in

Splash page from Buccaneers #27 (May 1951).

Captain DARING
FOR A LONG TIME CAPTAIN DARING HAD FOUGHT THE CRUEL AND TRICKY CAPTAIN FOOK, PRINCE OF PIRATES! NOW AT LAST HIS QUARRY WAS IN SIGHT AND THE REVENGE SAILED OUT TO BATTLE! BUT HOW COULD CAPTAIN DARING GUESS HE WAS SAILING INTO A DEADLY TRAP...SET BY A WILY AND MURDEROUS...
ALLIANCE of EVIL?

Reed Crandall's early Blackhawk KOs the last Kraut... from Military Comics #14 (Dec 1942).

Feature Comics. Crandall began drawing his adventures with issue #43 (April 1941), and for the next twenty issues drew some of the most elegant and realistic fight scenes ever staged between the "tiny titan" and a wide assortment of villains (all of whom were much larger than the small hero). Years later, Crandall would complain about how much he disliked drawing this feature because of the additional eye strain involved in rendering the details of a miniature superhero. Yet one would never know it from looking at the stories as Crandall never cut corners on the strip's renderings, no matter how minute the detail.

In early 1943 Crandall began a three year stint of duty with the Army-Air Force. Before leaving for the service, he moonlighted a story for Fiction House Publications that would eventually gain notoriety among his peers as a genuine masterpiece of the four-color medium. The 14-page entry entitled "Kaanga and the Master of the Moon Beasts" appeared in *Jungle Comics* #42 (June 1943), and is what some collectors today refer to as Crandall's textbook drawing lesson on the human anatomy. The splash page of this story was apparently so compelling that two years later, another Fiction House artist borrowed the image and traced it for the cover of *Jungle Comics* #67.

CAPTAIN DARING & ARIZONA RAINES

He completed his military duties in early 1946 and returned to Quality Comics where publisher "Busy" Arnold put him to work penciling the adventures of Blackhawk, now featured in both *Modern Comics* (previously *Military Comics*) and the character's own title, *Blackhawk*. Arnold knew that Reed was one of the finest pencilers in his shop and by letting other artists, such as Charles Cuidera or Alex Kotzky ink his work, he could almost double Crandall's output. This displeased Reed who had always enjoyed putting his final touch and delineation on his own work and even his many fans today realize that the best covers and stories by Reed Crandall were always inked by Crandall himself.

The cover of Jungle Comics #67 (Jul 1945) was swiped from Crandall's Kaänga splash page published two years earlier in Jungle Comics #42 (Jun 1943)

But the page rates at Quality were phenomenal and Busy Arnold was a generous man. He always paid big Christmas bonuses to the talented people in his company and he also threw some of the most lavish Christmas parties at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City every year. Crandall was also given the penciling job on Captain Triumph who appeared regularly in *Crack Comics*. Captain Triumph was one of the few blond superheroes to be found in comics at this time and his costume consisted only of a red T-shirt and white riding breeches.

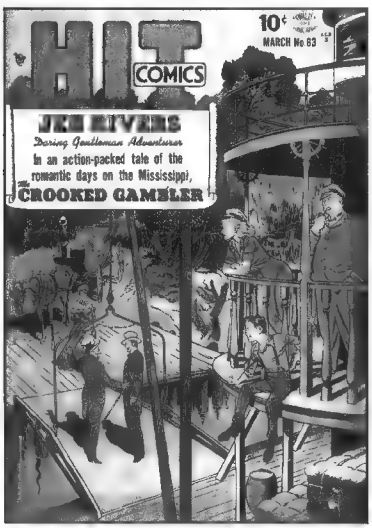
By the end of the war, Arnold had moved the art studio and editorial offices to 25 West 45th Street where Reed Crandall, Chuck Cuidera, Al Bryant, Jack Cole, Alex Kotzky, and Bill Ward would produce some of the finest art ever drawn for postwar comics. But American culture was evolving, and that evolution brought inevitable changes to the comics industry as well. By 1949, the interest in costumed heroes had waned considerably and Arnold began making changes in his comic book lineup. *Crack Comics* (featuring the adventures of Captain Triumph) became *Crack Western Comics*. *Hit Comics* (which had featured Kid Eternity) now introduced Jeb Rivers—the daring, gentleman, adventurer of the South. *Feature Comics* folded completely and *Police Comics* ended its ten year run of Jack

R. Crandall

Cole's *Plastic Man* by introducing the Ken Shannon---Private Eye series. Even *Modern Comics*, which still featured the popular Blackhawk feature, folded in 1950. Naturally, Crandall stayed very busy penciling the regular *Blackhawk* title and contributed a lot of work to most other titles too.

That same year, when *Kid Eternity* was converted to *Buccaneers* with issue #19, Crandall was the perfect choice as the artist to present tales of a new character, Captain Daring, and other "swashbuckling pirate yarns of adventure on the bounding main." Crandall's diligence for historical accuracy and details with ships, rigging, costuming and swordplay was top-notch. He also captured the same feeling of the gritty and rugged west with his covers and stories drawn for *Crack Western* depicting the adventures of "Arizona Raines." For *Hit Comics*, he went to great lengths to portray an accurate picture of the old South and Mississippi steam boat life with the bold and courageous "Jeb Rivers." Not too surprisingly, Crandall excelled at anything he was handed at Quality including crime, romance, war, and especially anything that needed an accurate "historical" touch.

Crandall's "Daring Gentleman Adventurer" Jeb Rivers was featured on the cover of Hit Comics #63 (Mar 1950).



As busy as Reed Crandall was at Quality, he still found the time to occasionally moonlight a story here and there for other publishers. In 1949 he contributed two stories for Charlie Biro's short-lived experimental *TOPS*—the "Adult Magazine of Dramatic Picture Stories." He also did several romance jobs for Ziff-Davis. In 1952, he penciled two horror stories for Standard Publications. Then in 1953, for reasons still unclear to this day, Reed left Quality and never returned. Quality Comics continued on for the next three years before selling their beloved *Blackhawk* and other comic titles to DC.

CRANDALL AT EC

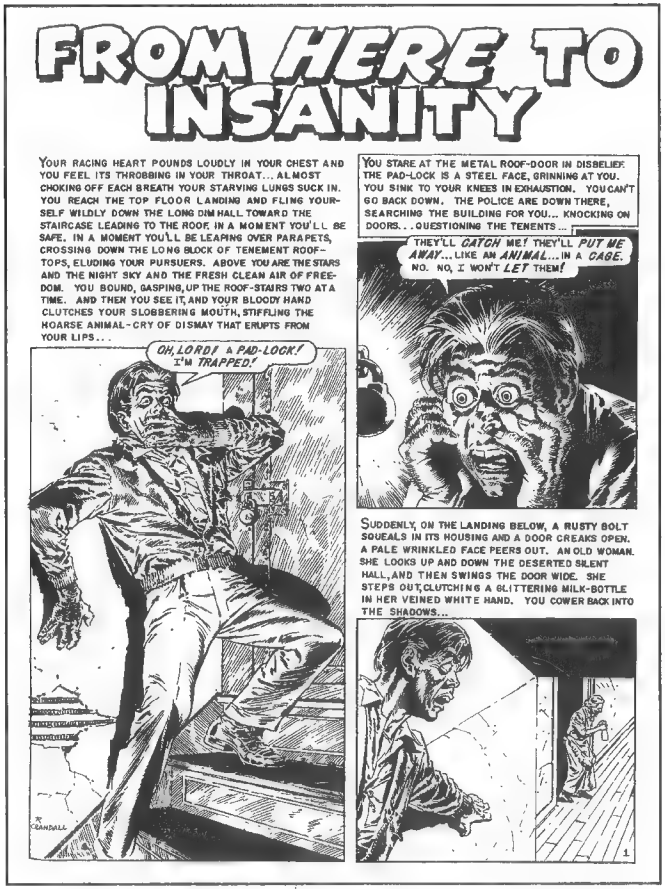
After leaving Quality, Crandall found his way to the offices of Entertaining Comics Publications (EC) located at 225 Lafayette Street. EC publisher, William M. Gaines, recalled years later, "He came walking in one day and of course we all had heard of Reed Crandall and we were just as impressed with him as he was with us, so we fell on each other's necks and he became part of the group immediately. He was a fine, fine craftsman and did some of our very best stuff."

EC's now-legendary editor, Al Feldstein, also remembered Crandall's work and said the following in a 1972 interview: "Reed Crandall was always one of my idols and when he walked into the office looking for work I fell on my knees because I always worshipped his style. Reed's style had already been tuned. His style, his interpretation had already been years in developing. He was competent and what he did for us was terrific."

HOAG LEANED BACK IN HIS BED, LIT HIS CIGAR, AND PUFFED ON IT CONTENTEDLY. HE KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING! HE COULD SEE IT IN HIS MIND'S EYE. HE'D FIGURED THE WHOLE THING OUT! AFTER THE PRISONERS HAD BEEN MARCHED BACK, HE'D FOUND THE CACHE OF MEAT AND REMOVED IT...
HEH, HEH! SO HERRICK WON'T BE ABLE TO STALL THEM MUTTS OFF NOW! THEY'LL RIP HIM TO SHREDS!
HOAG WAITED FOR THE EAR-SPLITTING SCREAMS... THE GURGLING DEATH CRY! BUT NO CRIES CAME! ONLY THE HOWLING SNARLING YELPS OF THE STARVED DOGS DRIFTED TO HIM... DRAWING NEARER...NEARER...
SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE GONNA MAKE THEIR KILL RIGHT OUT THERE IN FRONT WHERE I CAN SEE!
HOAG PEERED THROUGH HIS BEDROOM WINDOW, FLIPPING OFF THE LIGHT SO HE COULD SEE INTO THE MOONLIT DARKNESS. THE HOWLS OF THE DOGS WERE CLOSER NOW. BUT SUDDENLY THERE WAS ANOTHER SOUND... A MORE FRIGHTENING SOUND... THE SOUND OF A DOOR SLAMMING...
NO! IT CAN'T BE!

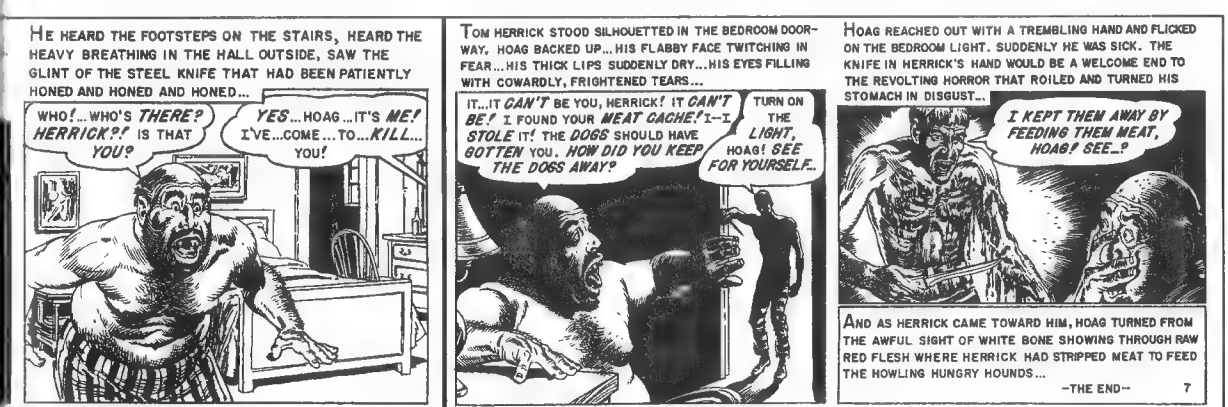
Crandall's final panel for EC's "Only Skin Deep" from Tales From The Crypt #38 (Oct/Nov 1953). Splash from Crime SuspenStories #18 (Aug/Sep 1953).

With his powerful approach to story telling and his enduring fine-line illustrative techniques with pen, brush and ink, Reed Crandall created a significant amount of art for EC's popular series of horror, science fiction, SuspenStories, and New Direction comic titles. One of the best remembered, and ghastliest horror stories that Crandall produced for EC was a seven page classic called "Only Skin Deep" published in *Tales from the Crypt* #38 (October/November 1953). The story reaches its climax with a man who rips the skin off his wife's face, exposing flesh and muscles. Another classic tale that appeared in *Crime SuspenStories* #25 (October/November 1954), titled "Dog Food" told the grisly story of a prison camp run by a notorious warden who keeps half-starved dogs on hand to keep his prisoners captive. In the end the warden meets his maker when one of the prisoners breaks out and manages to arrive at his house, having had to feed strips of his own flesh to the dogs to keep them off him.


FROM HERE TO INSANITY
YOUR RACING HEART POUNDS LOUDLY IN YOUR CHEST AND YOU FEEL ITS THROBBING IN YOUR THROAT... ALMOST CHOKING OFF EACH BREATH YOUR STARVING LUNGS SUCK IN. YOU REACH THE TOP FLOOR LANDING AND FLING YOURSELF WILDLY DOWN THE LONG DIM HALL TOWARD THE STAIRCASE LEADING TO THE ROOF. IN A MOMENT YOU'LL BE SAFE. IN A MOMENT YOU'LL BE LEAPING OVER PARAPETS, CROSSING DOWN THE LONG BLOCK OF TENEMENT ROOFTOPS, ELUDING YOUR PURSUERS. ABOVE YOU ARE THE STARS AND THE NIGHT SKY AND THE FRESH CLEAN AIR OF FREEDOM. YOU BOUND, GASPING, UP THE ROOF-STAIRS TWO AT A TIME. AND THEN YOU SEE IT, AND YOUR BLOODY HAND CLUTCHES YOUR SLOBBERING MOUTH, STIFFLING THE HOARSE ANIMAL-CRY OF DISMAY THAT ERUPTS FROM YOUR LIPS...
OH, LORD! A PAD-LOCK! I'M TRAPPED!
YOU STARE AT THE METAL ROOF-DOOR IN DISBELIEF. THE PAD-LOCK IS A STEEL FACE, GRINNING AT YOU. YOU SINK TO YOUR KNEES IN EXHAUSTION. YOU CAN'T GO BACK DOWN. THE POLICE ARE DOWN THERE, SEARCHING THE BUILDING FOR YOU... KNOCKING ON DOORS... QUESTIONING THE TENENTS...
THEY'LL CATCH ME! THEY'LL PUT ME AWAY... LIKE AN ANIMAL... IN A CAGE. NO. NO, I WON'T LET THEM!
SUDDENLY, ON THE LANDING BELOW, A RUSTY BOLT SQUEALS IN ITS HOUSING AND A DOOR CREAKS OPEN. A PALE WRINKLED FACE PEERS OUT. AN OLD WOMAN. SHE LOOKS UP AND DOWN THE DESERTED SILENT HALL, AND THEN SWINGS THE DOOR WIDE. SHE STEPS OUT, CLUTCHING A GLITTERING MILK-BOTTLE IN HER VEINED WHITE HAND. YOU COWER BACK INTO THE SHADOWS...

There were many other "fiendish" favorites too. One of Crandall's wildest stories appeared in *Crime SuspenStories* #18 (August/September 1953) entitled "From Here to Insanity." It's the story of a wild and crazy maniac who threatens an old deaf

Crandall's shocking "Dog Food" from Crime SuspenStories #25, (Oct/Nov 1954, below) with gross realism.


HE HEARD THE FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS, HEARD THE HEAVY BREATHING IN THE HALL OUTSIDE, SAW THE GLINT OF THE STEEL KNIFE THAT HAD BEEN PATIENTLY HONED AND HONED AND HONED...
WHO!...WHO'S THERE? HERRICK?! IS THAT YOU?
YES...HOAG...IT'S ME! I'VE...COME...TO...KILL... YOU!
TOM HERRICK STOOD SILHOUETTED IN THE BEDROOM DOORWAY. HOAG BACKED UP... HIS FLABBY FACE TWITCHING IN FEAR... HIS THICK LIPS SUDDENLY DRY... HIS EYES FILLING WITH COWARDLY, FRIGHTENED TEARS...
IT...IT CAN'T BE YOU, HERRICK! IT CAN'T BE! I FOUND YOUR MEAT CACHE! I--I STOLE IT! THE DOGS SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN YOU. HOW DID YOU KEEP THE DOGS AWAY?
TURN ON THE LIGHT, HOAG! SEE FOR YOURSELF...
HOAG REACHED OUT WITH A TREMBLING HAND AND FLICKED ON THE BEDROOM LIGHT. SUDDENLY HE WAS SICK. THE KNIFE IN HERRICK'S HAND WOULD BE A WELCOME END TO THE REVOLTING HORROR THAT ROILED AND TURNED HIS STOMACH IN DISGUST...
I KEPT THEM AWAY BY FEEDING THEM MEAT, HOAG! SEE...?
AND AS HERRICK CAME TOWARD HIM, HOAG TURNED FROM THE AWFUL SIGHT OF WHITE BONE SHOWING THROUGH RAW RED FLESH WHERE HERRICK HAD STRIPPED MEAT TO FEED THE HOWLING HUNGRY HOUNDS...
--THE END--
7

REMEMBERING REED...

It was in late 1964 that I first met and visited Reed Crandall, who at that time was living with his mother in a rented apartment on Sycamore Street in Wichita, Kansas. This introduction came

through the efforts of local collector and Edgar Rice Burroughs-enthusiast Robert Barrett, who had agreed to take Jerry Weist and myself over to meet this accomplished and talented artist. It was my first meeting with any professional comic artist and for me was a special day I will always remember. I was only sixteen years old at the time and Reed would have been around forty seven. I remember thinking that day that Reed had already been working in the comics field longer than I had lived. Twenty four years to be exact.

I must admit that back in those days I was a hard-core EC Comic fan/addict who didn't really know much about Reed's earlier accomplishments in the comics. I knew he had drawn Blackhawk for many years, but outside of that I hadn't a clue. Remember, this was still a few years before Jim Steranko's *History Of The Comics* was published. (That wonderful reference provided, for many of us younger fans, our first real insights into the Golden Age.

I recall that during the first visit with Reed, he showed me a notebook binder that held several excerpted comic stories, mostly of jobs he had done for EC or *Treasure Chest* comics. I don't remember ever seeing any of his Golden Age work in that notebook, (although Reed did have a file cabinet which probably held examples, and much more.) It would be several years later before I discovered just how prolific and incredible his contributions had been to the Quality Comics group during the late 1940s and 1950s.

That special day I discovered that Reed Crandall was a relaxed, laid back sort of guy who just loved to draw. He also had a good sense of humor about himself and would readily answer any questions that I asked. He clearly lacked any inflated ego about himself or his work... in fact he would usually belittle his work for one reason or another. Reed was a short fellow, perhaps about five foot six, or seven... bald, and usually wore khaki trousers and white T-shirts during the occasions that I visited him on Sycamore Street.

On that first visit, I also remember clearly how excited I was about seeing the twice-up pages of original art that he was working on at the time. It was his second story for

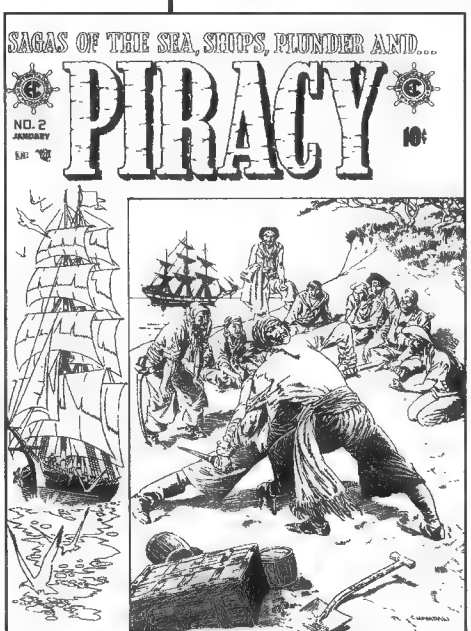
(Continued on page 55)

R. Crandall

woman as police search her apartment building for him. The crazed maniac winds up in a padded cell at the end of the story, and the art is heralded by many fans and collectors as possibly Crandall's finest drawing and ink brush work ever seen in comics. His characterization of the maniac, with bulging eyes and hairy hands, goes far beyond the descriptive writing of this story and teases us with the thought that this guy could actually exist! We entertain that thought because, at the same time, we can't possibly believe that anybody, even a good comic artist, could make up such a crazy looking person.

A NEW DIRECTION

Reed was capable of delivering whatever Gaines and Feldstein wanted and although they didn't utilize his talents on any of their New Trend covers, they did give him several cracks at it later on. After EC's horror and crime titles bit the dust, a New Direction of comic titles were introduced. This all coming about due to the installation of the newly formed Comics Code Association of America. From 1955 to 1956 Crandall drew 25 stories for the new EC titles *Extra, Impact, M.D., Piracy*, and *Valor.* He was also eventually assigned to do three covers for *Piracy*. These appeared on issues #2, 3 and 4. They were all very good, especially his first cover for issue #2 (December 1954), which featured a beautiful rendition of pirates fighting on the beach, borrowed from and, paying tribute to, a famous painting by the noted illustrator Howard Pyle (whom Crandall was very fond of). After EC's *New Direction* titles floundered, Crandall stayed long enough to produce three covers and eight stories for the EC Picto-Fiction Adult comic magazines. These magazines were publisher Gaines' final attempt to produce horror, crime and romance stories that didn't have to conform to a code of approval. The now-famous and collectible EC magazine titles were *Confessions Illustrated, Crime Illustrated, Shock Illustrated* and *Terror Illustrated.*



Crandall's tribute to Howard Pyle's book illustration titled "Which Shall be Captain?" from Piracy #2 (Jan 1955).

The Picto-Fiction

SOME SCRATCH! LOOKS ALMOST LIKE A BULLET WOUND!
I'VE AN INSTINCT FOR THIS!
HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOUR WAY THROUGH HERE? IT'S MORE AN ANIMAL PATH THAN A TRAIL!
HURRY! THEY CAN'T BE TOO FAR BEHIND!
AMAZING! SHE LEAPS FROM ROCK TO ROCK AS GRACEFULLY AS...
...AS A CAT!
HOLD IT! LET'S TAKE A BREATHER! I NEED THE REST AND THERE'RE A FEW THINGS I'D LIKE TO ASK...
BUT IT'S JUST A LITTLE FURTHER AND--
PUMA!
DON'T SHOOT! YOU'LL GIVE AWAY OUR POSITION!

Author Roger Hill was privileged to see Reed working on this page from "Spawn Of The Cat People" (Creepy #2 1965).

R. Crandall

books were unique in that, unlike their four-color ancestors, most of the art was reproduced in black and white. A few of the stories utilized color overlays on various pages or panels, but by and large, the artists were free to use whatever tools and techniques they wanted, in order to capture a variety of textures and shading effects in black and white. Many forms of Zip-A-Tone, Craftint, Ben-Day screens and charcoal pencil were used on these stories which added a greater depth to the final printed product. The artists at EC seemed to enjoy this new range of artistic expression and once again, Reed Crandall went all out in producing some beautiful work.

Crandall's scene from John Carter Of Mars (1964, Canaveral Press, 1st Edition, hardcover) is considered by most historians to be his finest work of illustration.

One particular story, a ten-pager from *Confessions Illustrated* #2 (May 1956), entitled "Unfaithful Wife" featured Crandall at the top of his form drawing the most beautiful women he had ever put into a comic. As to be expected, his men in the story were muscular and very handsome as well. Unfortunately, the Picto-Fiction titles only lasted two issues each, except for *Shock Illustrated* which enjoyed only limited distribution for its third issue. The year of 1956 marked the end of an era as Reed Crandall and other EC artists bid farewell to the one company that had given them the greatest artistic freedom.

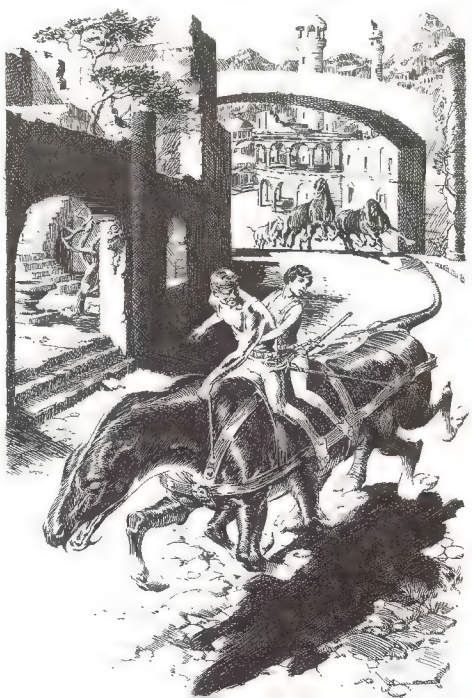
John Carter and Deja Thoris escape on a thoat in an unused illustration for Fighting Man Of Mars (1964).

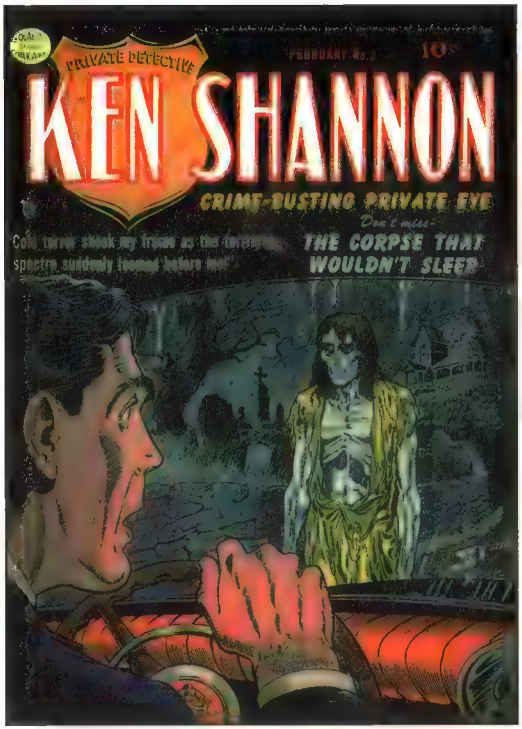
BEYOND EC

Crandall never missed a beat as far as finding other work. Even before the demise of EC's comic books he had lined up several jobs for Stan Lee over at Atlas. By mid 1956 Reed's work began appearing in *Battlefront, Frontier Western, Gunsmoke Western, Journey Into Mystery, Marines In Battle, Mystical Tales, Strange Tales* and many other titles under the Atlas imprint.

Around this same time he began working with another veteran comic artist: Ray Willner. Willner had been in the comics field since 1940 and for a time in 1945 served as editor for Holyoke Publications. Working separately, and together, Crandall and Willner turned out some of the most beautiful jungle stories for the *Buster Brown* comic book which was only distributed through Buster Brown Shoe Stores across the US. Although Willner's inks weren't quite as good as Crandall's, his fluid brush work did compliment Reed's pencils as they worked together for several years on the "Ghanga" jungle boy series. (By the way, Ghanga is translated to mean "a trainer and driver of elephants"). Later on, his name was changed to "Gunga." The Gunga stories were always filled with rich backgrounds of jungle foliage and wild animals, and good basic stories of adventure. Willner and Crandall also worked together on *The Adventures of Robin Hood* comics that (you guessed it) were only distributed through the Robin Hood Shoe Stores.

At the same time, and up through *(Continued on page 55)*





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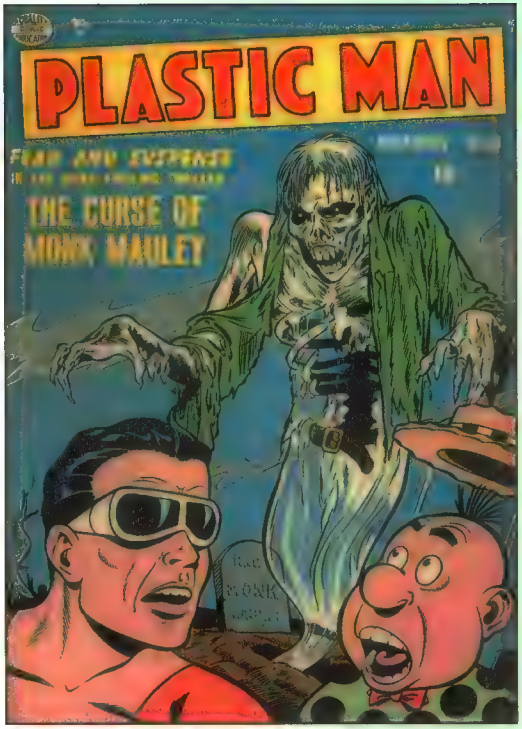

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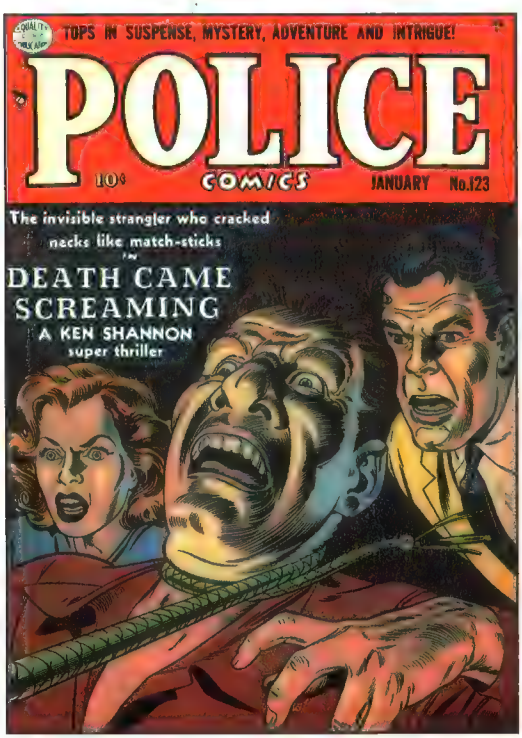

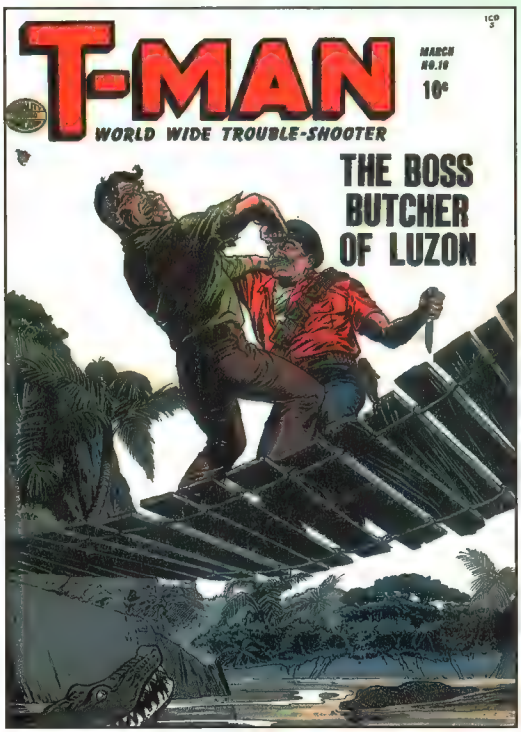

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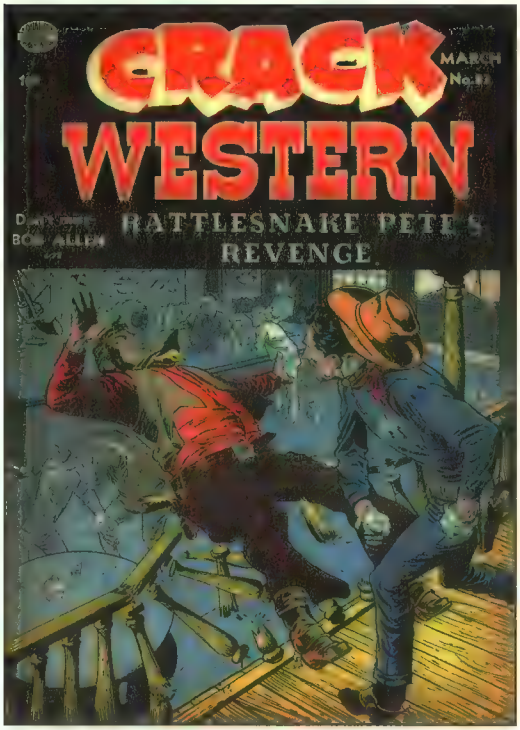

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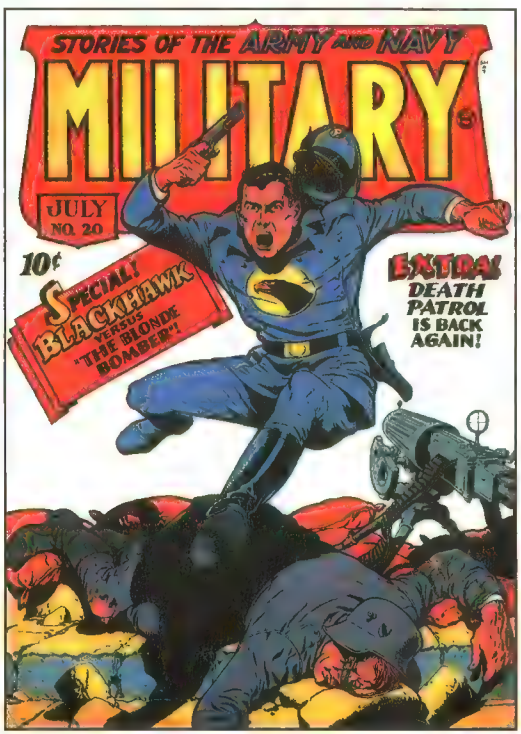

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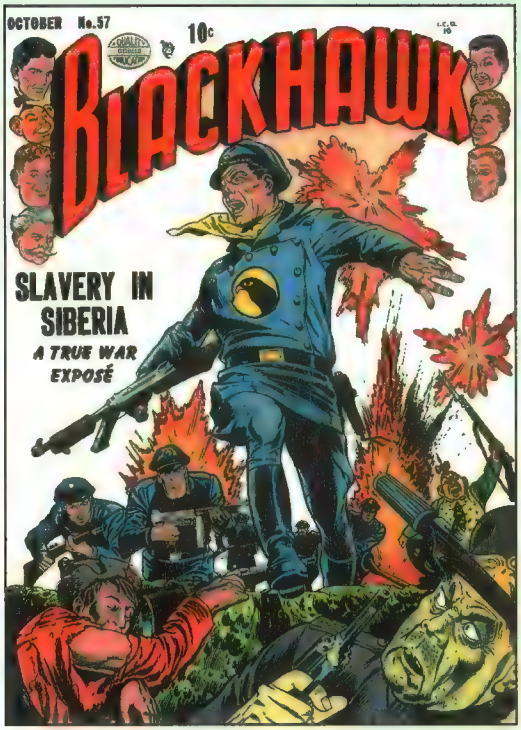

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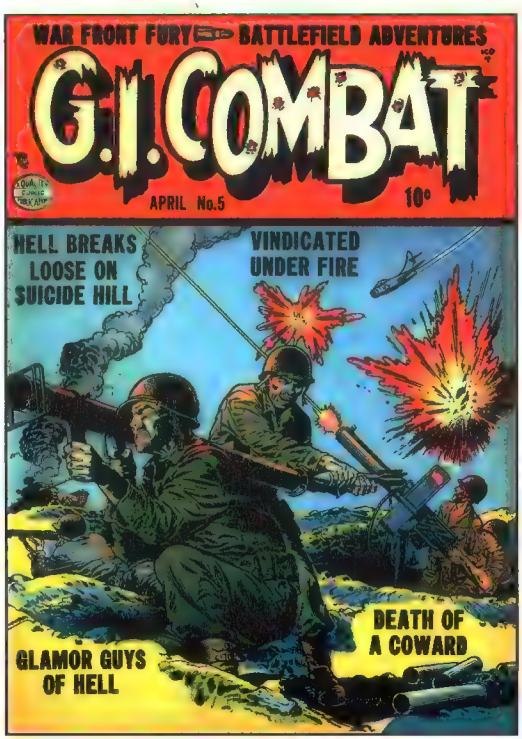

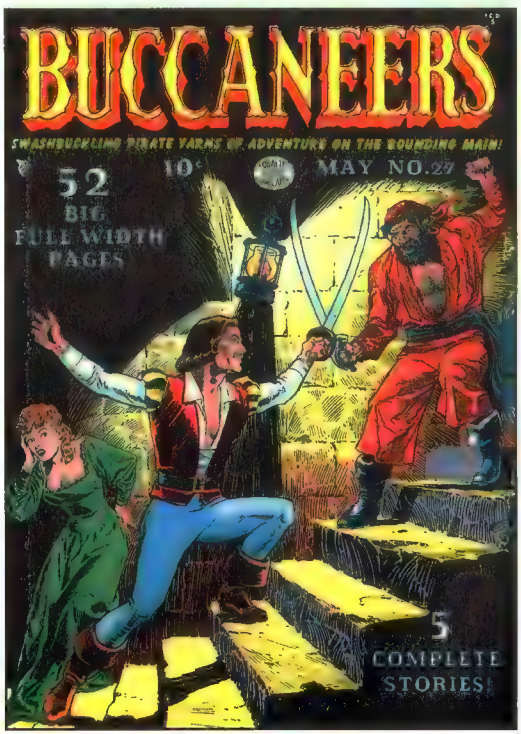

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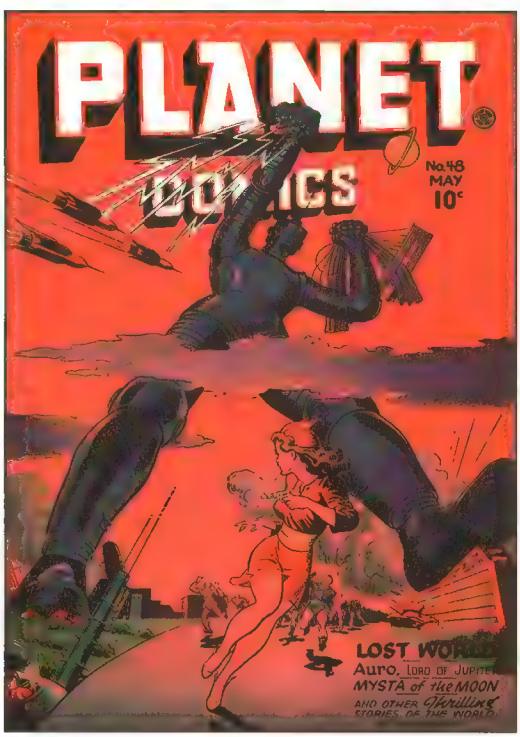

▼ #48 May 1947

PLANET
No.52
JAN.
10¢
MYSTA OF THE MOON LIFTS THE CURTAIN SHROUDING THE WORLD YET TO COME, IN "Mystery of the TIME CHAMBER!"
AURO, Lord of Jupiter,
SPACE RANGERS
and many others—

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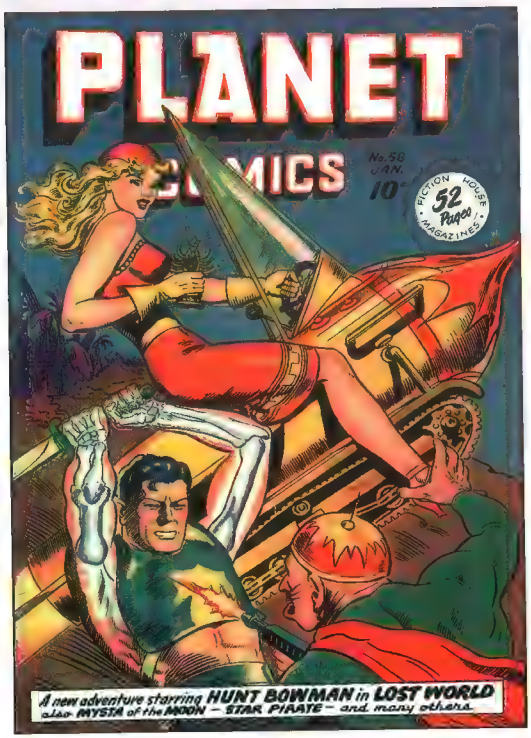

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▲ #63 Winter 1949 ▼ #67 1952

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25¢
CAPTAIN AMERICA
128 PAGES
COMICS
THE HUMAN TORCH
IN THIS ISSUE

The Mystery of the Cap Annual

A look at one of the rarest and most collectible Timely oddities ever published!

BY STEPHEN H. GENTNER

During a recent visit with Mark "the Phantom" Wilson recently to view some of the Rockford Collection books. They were glorious, indeed—(and, "glory" comes at a price)! Yet as so often happens when you get to observe the inner workings of a comic dealer, you see boxes and boxes...and stacks upon stacks of cool books waiting to be catalogued, priced, and sold. To the dealer, they are "inventory." To us collectors, they are the stuff dreams are made of...and all just "lying around" on the floor and shelves!

In one such box I saw a book which really didn't "fit" with the other books too well. It was larger, wider, thicker, and looked to be out of place—thinking it a magazine, I carefully lifted it out of mid-stack and held in my hands the *Captain America Annual*!

"Wow!" I exclaimed—"where did you get THIS?"

Blandly Mark replied "Oh, that's a bunch of books some guy in Canada sent me that he wants to sell."

I responded intelligently, "homina-homina-homina...."

Mark came back with eyebrows lifted "Why, Steve...? are you interested?"

It's rather difficult at that point to seem indifferent, to try to keep the price from going up—seeing as how my eyeballs were bugging out of my head!

Reality set in when Mark added "Well, if I get them, I'll give you a price on the *Cap Annual*. They're *extremely tough* to find ya know."

I knew.

In previous issues of *CBM*, I have "beaten to death" many a reader with my "target of opportunity" doctrine. Yet it held so true that day I had to remind myself of my own advice. Thoughts like, "when will you see another?" (never), "it's only money..." raced through my mind. But even knowing what he had, Mark, to his credit was fair. And I, remembering my "target of opportunity" doctrine just had to go for it.

Getting a great book always seems to happen when you aren't flush. Yet securing the book and suffering fiscal embarrassment at the time blurs with the passage of time. In 3 months you aren't strapped anymore, and are actually looking for other targets of opportunity. (You could be in debtor's prison...but hey, check out that cover gloss!)

After I got the book, I began to ponder it...I mean, what a weird book! Yet the vagaries of the cover, contents, price, and size of this book, along with its scarcity, make it not only a feather in any comic collector's cap (especially if you collect Captain America, Timely, or squarebounds!) as well as a real puzzle in the timeline of comic book history!

Published by the innocuous sounding "Universal Crime Stories Inc." in New York City, USA, the *Captain America Annual* was copyrighted in both the United States and Canada. Both Bob Overstreet and Ernie Gerber date this tome circa 1942.

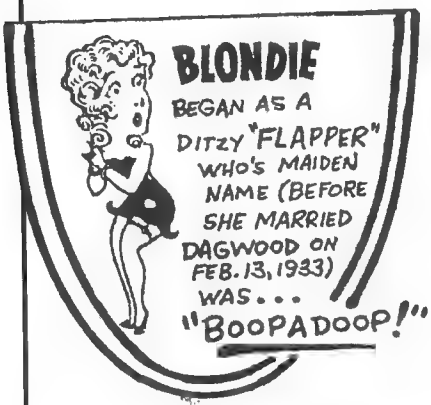
The contents are black and white, and are the complete interiors of *Marvel Mystery* #33 and then *Captain America* #18. Squarebound, the covers are blank inside as is the back cover. The cover itself is the same as *Captain America* #22 drawn by Syd Shores.

The cover graphic is a definite WWII piece...I've always thought the helmets of the optically and dentally challenged Japanese on this cover were reminiscent of "fezzes." So it looks at first glance as though the landing craft have disgorged their boiling contents onto a beach where Cap and Bucky are beating up Shriners!

According to collec-

(Continued on 54)

ROLF'S ~∞ Believe It - It's True!

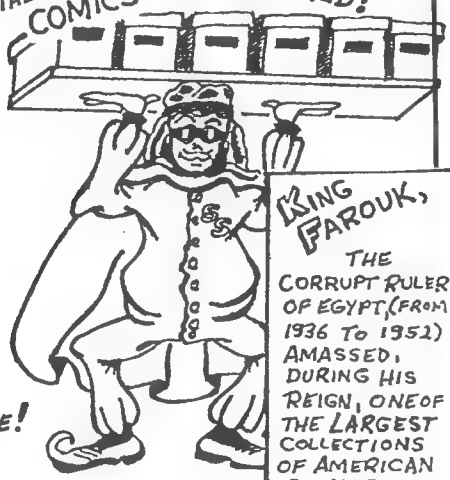


BLONDIE

BEGAN AS A DITZY "FLAPPER" WHO'S MAIDEN NAME (BEFORE SHE MARRIED DAGWOOD ON FEB. 13, 1933) WAS... "BOOPADOOP!"

By Rolf Gerdau

"SUPERSHIEK!" THE KING WITH THE MOST COMICS IN THE WORLD!



KING FAROUK, THE CORRUPT RULER OF EGYPT, (FROM 1936 TO 1952) AMASSED, DURING HIS REIGN, ONE OF THE LARGEST COLLECTIONS OF AMERICAN COMICS EVER!

DELL-(ACORTE) COMICS

THE "DELL" OF DELL COMICS IS A CONTRACTION OF THE FOUNDER'S NAME.... GEORGE DELACORTE!

are GOOD COMICS!

UNKNOWN 1ST APPEARANCE:

"ADVENTURE COMICS" (#216) FEATURES THE 1ST "MEETING" OF SUPERBOY AND "SUPERMAN."

SUPERMAN IS REALLY A COLLEGE PROFESSOR WHO PUTS ON THE MASQUERADE TO HELP SUPERBOY.

... HIS IDENTITY IS REVEALED AT THE END OF THE STORY.

HE IS PROF. OLSEN (OF SMALLVILLE!!). IN A FINAL PANEL HE HUGS HIS YOUNG SON....

JIMMY OLSEN!!

"ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN" #3 (FEB.-1949) ANNOUNCED A STORY WRITING CONTEST, FOR READERS.

ISSUE #9 (FEB-1950) PRINTED THE 3RD PLACE WINNING STORY. IT'S AUTHOR? ..... (AN "E"-LESS) "NELSON BRIDWELL!!"

Bad For Kids?

WE ALL KNOW how greatly comics influenced us as we grew up in different time periods. Much has been written and discussed of that "Dark Age" in comic history, in the middle 1950s, brought about by the negative influence of books and articles (such as Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*) and the congressional hearings so critical of the industry that lead to the choking censorship of the Comics Code Authority.

Since their inception in the 1930s, comics gained popularity at a phenomenal rate. But what was society's impression of the art form at its beginnings? An article published in the popular weekly magazine, *The Family Circle* reveals a great deal about the image and influence of this beloved entertainment form.

The date is April 17, 1942, and even though Superman is a mere four years old (Batman is three), comic book sales, spurred on by these new "superheroes" are, as revealed in this article, already selling at the fantastic rate of about "12 million per month, ...with no indication that the peak has been reached." (Very true!—as the *Gerber Photo-Journal* shows us, this rate would double in two years and continue to grow for eight years beyond that, to an unbelievable 75 million per month!)

The cover to this issue features Charlie Chaplain and an illustration of Batman and Robin (taken from the cover to *Batman* #9) and states "Should you worry...if you find your child lost in the spell of some such weird and fantastic tale as "Batman and Robin"? It then refers us to the three-page article inside.

The main article is entitled, "Are the Comics Bad for Children?" by H. Dyson Carter (amazingly, a distant relative of *CBM*'s editor) and is accompanied by illustrations of the popular characters—Flash, Hop Harrigan, Superman, Wonder Woman, and Buck Rogers. (An interesting caption to the Wonder Woman illustration says that she is the "daughter of the brain of Dr. William Moulton Marston, the Family Circle psychologist. A newcomer to the field of comics, she already has a large following, is a protagonist of his belief that the world's hope for the future is in women.")

There are two sidebars. The first is an editorial taken from the *Burlington* (Vermont) *Daily News*, espousing the value of Superman and his heroic ilk; and the second is a short piece by Dr. C. Bowie Millican, from the Department of English Literature at New York University, who also praise the Man of Steel, by comparing him to other heroic types from myth and legend (including interesting mentions of Thor and Loki!)

It begins by asking if this "young appetite for the weird...(and) sensational" should worry parents, and summarizes the findings of child psychologists—Dr. Lauretta Bender and Dr. Reginald S. Lourie—who sought to answer this question. These two psychologists begin by explaining that imagination and make believe are valuable and healthy, and that..."all children love comic books," regardless of their backgrounds and intelligence, and are reassured that good always triumphs over evil, since they always back the hero. "A boy doesn't follow Superman through his adventure. He is Superman—outwitting the villain, rescuing the fair lady in distress, setting things right. What follows are some remarkable (in light of future developments) and important observations that will fascinate anyone with even a limited knowledge of and interest in comic book history... plus provide insights about the sociology and psychology of comics in 1942.

The author sums up very well in the last paragraph— "It would seem, then, that Superman and his comic-book contemporaries occupy a rightful and harmless place in your child's scheme of things; that juvenile taste in entertainment changes very little from generation to generation; and that, to sum it up, parents are taking the comic-book craze more seriously than it deserves."

It's easy to think that sophistication is a product of our own age, but as this article illustrates—common sense and wisdom, rather than following a linear development through the ages, come and go like the cycles of a pendulum. And lest we think the fear and suspicion of the 1950s are over for good, let us all remember to "be on guard" so to speak as we remember what happened to the maturity exhibited in this study of comics during their infancy, in 1942!

BY ROLF GERDAU

Are The Comics Bad For Children?

STICKING BY SUPERMAN

Editorial in the Burlington (Vermont) Daily News

EVERY once in a while this newspaper gets literature promoting "wholesome" magazine comics to wean the younger folk away from the lurid picture magazines portraying murder, mayhem, thievery, conspiracy, intrigue, cannibalism, barratry, malfeasance, misfeasance, nonfeasance, and felonious assault. The promoters would like to have us say something pretty about the wholesome magazines, which offer the lives of "real heroes," supposedly as laden with deeds of inspiration and derring-do as the best efforts of Superman.

Somehow we don't react. This writer in his brattish days grew fat on a diet of scalps, knives in the back, Indians biting the dust, bloodcurdling screams at midnight, slinking and sinister Chinamen, haunted houses aclank with chains and all the other paraphernalia of the old-time thriller, which certainly needs take no back seat for Buck Rogers or The Phantom. This is advanced with some diffidence, however, because the writer grew up to be a newspaperman, and maybe that is all the wholesome magazine promoters want to prove.

Just the same, we have the depth of psychologists on our side. They argue that children are born with sound instincts against wholesome things. Who knows how many children have saved their lives by refusing to eat what is good for them? Who knows how many children averted serious neuroses by refusing the belief that moonshine about the bees and the flowers?

These psychologists say that children come into the world freighted with a full cargo of ruthlessness, lawlessness, and blood lust in their systems, and lurid picture magazines provide a harmless and satisfying outlet, permitting them to line up their ids with their superegos and develop into useful and constructive citizens.

That makes a lot of sense to us. There must be a good reason why so many juvenile haymow students into the scholarly researches of King Brady, Fred Fearnot, and Buffalo Bill grew up to be bankers, lawyers, preachers, and judges. Something of a comedown, perhaps, considering their superb inspiration, but tending to preserve the peace. We'll bet Hitler never read Nick Carter.

This writer vividly remembers lying behind the kitchen stove in a Vermont farmhouse sizzling through Jack Harkaway at a page a minute, and recalls particularly his utter enchantment when the nonchalant English hero clipped the ears off an Oriental spy and sent them back in a sewing basket to the arrogant sultan. What would those winter nights have been without Jack?

Even though the wholesome school lists such backers as Hendrik Willem Van Loon and Dr. George H. Gallup, we'll string along with the analytical psychologists. The leading sequence in the current wholesome offering is a pictorial life of Franklin D. Roosevelt. We have a good deal of respect for F.D., but Mr. Roosevelt can't leap a thousand feet into the air and bring down a warplane with his fists.

Superman can. That ought to settle it.

The Flash—the fastest man alive. Children today have all too little opportunity for any real adventuring of their own, but in the comics they can enjoy the thrill of danger, knowing with full certainty that the right will prevail, good will triumph.

Hop Harrigan—a favorite with aviation-minded youngsters. Like other comics readers, they are trying to develop a pattern of living, a cut for the development of their personalities. Hero tales, real or fictional, have long served this important purpose.

WHAT is this juvenile craze for "funnies" that are no longer funny? What is this youthful worship of impossible deeds by impossible heroes? And, more to the point, is there danger to your child in the wildly fanciful adventures of these pen-and-ink heroes?

The rising generation's make-believe heroes—Superman, Wonder Woman, Buck Rogers, Batman, The Flash, and the others—put between the covers of comic books, sell at the rate of 12,000,000 a month, with no indication that the peak has been reached. And this young appetite for the weird, the sensational, the lurid has parents baffled and worried.

Doctors Lauretta Bender and Reginald S. Lourie, child psychologists, thought these questions important enough and debatable enough to require investigation. Their findings are, in many ways, surprising—and reassuring.

First of all, they remind parents, it is perfectly natural for healthy children to seek thrilling and fantastic make-believe. It is an outlet for their energies, a stimulus to agile imaginations.

Before a child enters school, he best expresses himself with simple toys and games. When he starts school, a new world opens to him—the world of the printed page and the developing mind. At this point, physical energy finds most satisfactory release in group games, in competitive play. But the exploring child mind turns to stories—and the more active and fantastic the tale, the more exciting and wonderful it becomes. This, too, is understandable—for childhood is the land of wonder and the young mind has not yet made obeisance to the word "impossible."

Doctors Bender and Lourie found that all children love comic books—that the unusually bright child, along with the shy, gentle child and the less mentally quick, responds to the appeal of Superman and other comic-strip characters. "The desire for blood and thunder," the doctors say, "is not depraved." They point out that in the comic books "good" triumphs over "evil," no matter how threatening may be the gestures of the villain, and that children always back the hero and root him home. If the creators of comic strips ever deviate from the straight-and-narrow and describe evil ascendant over virtue, the sale of comic books will drop off alarmingly. But it is safe to say that comic-strip artists will never double-cross their public. They know child psychology!

Your youngster doesn't read the comic books simply for words and pictures. This devotion to pen and ink deities isn't all a matter of thrills and chills. A boy doesn't follow Superman through his adventures. He is Superman—outwitting the villain, rescuing the fair lady in distress, setting things right.

Yes, you say, but is this healthy? And what you mean is: Isn't it dangerous to put so much faith in fantasy? Isn't this escapism?

Doctors Bender and Lourie answer no to both questions. Your child isn't wrong. It's you who are wrong. You've lost touch, as adults invariably do, with the essence of childhood—which is a magic compound of imagination and fantasy. It isn't so much his faith that a child puts into these comic-book stories. It's his gathering emotions, his craving for self-expression, his desire to be part of great adventures. And great adventures, at his age, are limited only by the limits of his imagination. And where his imagination leaves off, Superman begins.

A typical American boy of 13 who has been a devotee of comic strips for three years and has a formidable collection of comic books, names Superman, Batman, and The Flash as his favorites and explains it thus, "Well, they're exciting, and I feel like I'm in on it." Asked if all this excitement doesn't keep him awake nights, he looks surprised. "Naw," he scoffed. "But," he confessed, "once I dreamt about Batman." However, he didn't look any the worse for the dream.

"It is evident from our case studies," say Doctors Bender and Lourie, "that whenever anxiety, aggression, or confusion blamed on comic books, it invariably can be traced further back in a child's experience." They cite the case of 12-year-old Jessie, who had had an unfortunate home life. Her father had committed suicide, her mother was incurably ill. Jessie began to fail at school,

By H. Dyson Carter

HEROES CAPABLE OF ANY WONDERWORK—BORN OF FANTASY BUT RELATED TO REALITY—ARE BUT TODAY'S COUNTERPARTS OF WHAT YOU YOURSELF THRILLED TO AS A CHILD

Superman—and if you don't know him, ask any child. His fantastic adventures, which may seem not only absurd but trashy to an adult, have deeper meanings for children, who know what thrills they want. Attempts to publish wishy-washy comics fail badly.

she rebelled against authority, she suffered from guilt feelings. And when Doctors Bender and Lourie found her, she was a patient in a mental ward. She, too, had been a comic-book fan. Was this, in part, responsible for her condition? Doctors Bender and Lourie meant to find out. They had her favorite comics restored to her—and waited to see how she would react.

A few days later Jessie told them that she wasn't Jessie any more. She was Shiera.

"Why Shiera?" they asked.

"Because she's in trouble and Flash rescues her."

This was Jessie's way of escaping her own troubles—troubles too heavy for her years. But it was even more that.

Said Jessie, "The funnies imagine for me."

"You like their imagining better than your own?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Why?"

"Because it always comes out right," the child told them.

Jessie you see, could not imagine her way out of her own difficulties. There was too much stark tragedy in her young life. But in Shiera she found a fictional counterpart—beset by troubles, pursued by evil—who was rescued in the end. So Jessie was letting Shiera show her the way to the happy ending she could not find for herself. And this was just the psychological medicine Jessie needed.

Then there was the case of Tommy, a 10-year-old delinquent. Disobedience, truancy, and stealing brought him to Doctor Lourie's attention.

The boy had been unhappy at home. Without guidance from his father, and frequently "blamed" by his mother, Tommy revolted. He expressed his need to get even by staying away from school, by committing petty thefts.

At the clinic he showed great enthusiasm for Batman comics and idolized Robin, the boy who helps Batman in his fight against crime. Paradoxical for Tommy to line up on the side of right against wrong? Not at all! To Doctor Lourie this indicated that Tommy was playing the part of the boy he really wanted to be.

"Rather than fostering Tommy's delinquent drive," says Doctor Lourie, "the comics acted as support for his wavering sense of right and wrong. They formed, in this case, an inexpensive form of therapy."

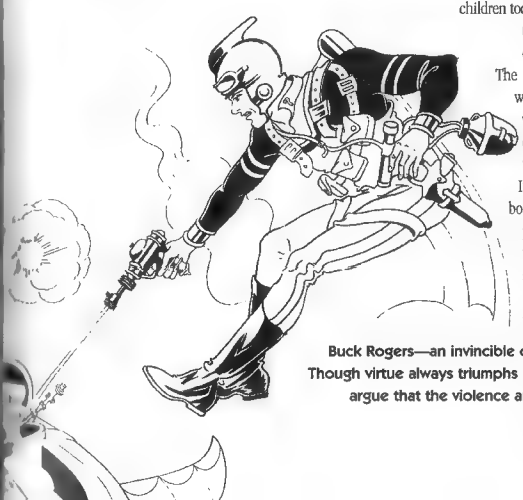
When next your offspring wears the bemused expression of one who inhabits the moon with Buck Rogers and your patience is rubbed thin by Superman, in one form or another, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner—and sometimes in all forms simultaneously—soothe yourself with the thought that it will all be over in about two years. Comic-book editors say that's as long as the average youngster can be held enthralled. And, in the meantime, you might try to recapture your own childhood….

Remember when you palpitated to "The Perils of Pauline" and, at a critical moment in the fortunes of the heroine, teetered forward in your seat and got your all-day sucker snagged in the braids of the wide-eyed little girl in front of you? Remember when you came home flushed and triumphant from the latest daring exploit of William S. Hart, who fired from the hip and always drilled the villain straight through his foul black heart? And remember when you used to smuggle the King Brady and Nick Carter books to bed with you and read them far into the night while your trusting mother thought you slept?

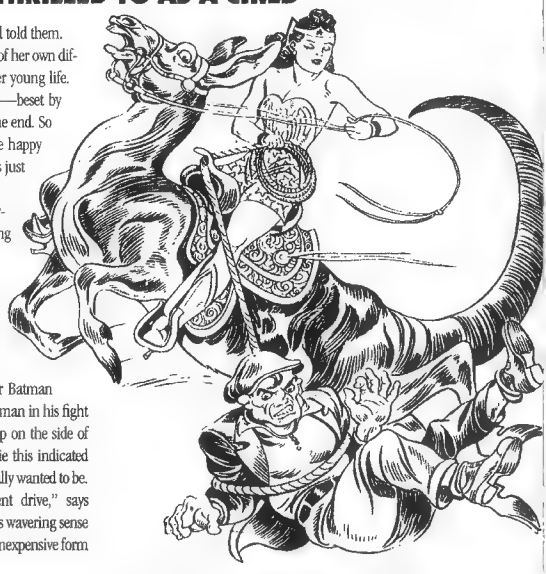
In those days, no less than in these, parents were referring to horse operas and paper-covered novels as "that stuff" and saying, "What is the world coming to, anyway!" And you, like your own children today, were secretly sorry for Mamma and Papa because they were so completely insensible to the finer things of life.

The funnies problem was summed up by one mother, whose young son is an avid collector of comic books, when she said wistfully, "I wouldn't mind so much if only I could sweep under the bed. But he's got them there, too!"

It would seem, then, that Superman and his comic-book contemporaries occupy a rightful and harmless place in your child's scheme of things; that juvenile taste in entertainment changes very little from generation to generation; and that, to sum it up, parents are taking the comic-book craze more seriously than it deserves.



Buck Rogers—an invincible champion of justice 500 years in the future. Though virtue always triumphs in the comics, some educators and parents argue that the violence and crime portrayed may prompt dangerous imitation. But psychologists refute this.



Wonder Woman—daughter of the brain of Dr. William Moulton Marston, the Family Circle psychologist. A newcomer to the field of comics, she already has a large following, is a protagonist of his belief that the world's hope for the future is in women.

THE SUPERMAN LEGEND

Along the shores of the ancient Mediterranean, Superman is Atlas with the weight of the world on his shoulders, and Mercury, the fleetest of the gods. In the ancient North he is Thor wielding his mighty hammer, and Beowulf, the first English epic hero, with the strength of 30 men in his handgrip. In folk-America he is Mike Fink heaving a bale of cotton onto a Mississippi steamboat, and Paul Bunyan lifting the trunk of a giant redwood. But Superman's strength is more than the brute strength of a Goliath and his cunning more than the cunning of a Loki, moral and spiritual forces are a part of his power: He is the good as opposed to the bad, the right as opposed to the wrong, his is justice for the oppressed of all walks of life. He is Hercules cleansing the Augean stables, Prometheus bringing fire from heaven, Samson breaking the pillars of the temple. With the X-ray vision and acute hearing, Superman is modern man applying modern science, and modern science applied to modern man. As Clark Kent, a typical American, Superman represents all that modern American youth ever hoped to be, physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. His achievements are unlimited, like those of the modern world. The golden apples of the Hesperides are just beyond and he will reach them—and Utopia, and on, and on!

Dr. C. Bowie Millican,
Department of English Literature,
New York University

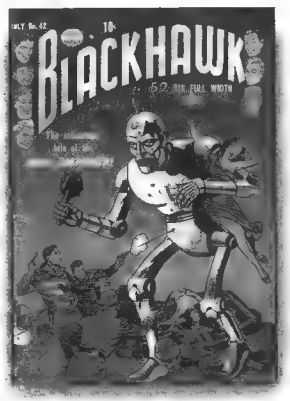
(Continued from page 22)

Fantastic Fiends, Mad Machines and Evil Schemes

Crandall was an immensely gifted illustrator, a master of anatomy whose figures were full of grace, character and realism. The distribution of weight on his figures was always convincing… and his composition, costuming, and settings were superb.

Crandall Choreography

An exciting example of the title at its best can be seen in issue #42 (July 1951) which features Crandall's pencils on all three Blackhawk adventures—plus on the "The Iron Emperor" cover. That story is an absolute classic, featuring a typically awesome Crandall menace. Seems a giant robot wants to rule the country of Voslia, populated by jolly democratic souls in lederhosen and brush-hats. This story features the kind of fight scenes that Crandall choreographed so well, with masterfully designed piles of Blackhawks and villains mixing it up. Some of today's comic artists could learn a thing or two by studying the way that Crandall "jammed" so many fighting bodies into a panel and still kept it clear, uncluttered and beautiful to the eye!



This tale also depicts a less merciful side of the Blackhawks when they literally mow down the (armed) bad guys with pistol fire when faced with overwhelming odds! In the end, the seemingly intelligent mechanical man is revealed as a remote-controlled super-robot, yet another recurring theme in these adventures. (Note: The last two pages of this story look as if another artist gave the overworked Mr. Crandall an assist.)

The second entry, "The City That Must Perish," involves Publus, an ancient city in the remote mountains populated by the "direct descendants of the Romans of old!" and showcasing Crandall's great flair for historic costuming. Still another recurring Blackhawk theme occurs here. The Romans, basically good guys, are misled by the baddies and a big culture gap into mistrusting and capturing the Hawks at first. Of course, in the end our heroes straighten things out through reason, intelligence, pure goodness… and beating the stuffing out of every bad guy in sight! In the final entry, "The Free Country of Karastan" (presumably they sell carpets there?) summons the Hawks to the aid of fez-and-turban-wearing folk of that Middle Eastern land to outwit the scheming of the slinky villainess Nicola, rendered with loving attention by the absolute master of the comic-book bad girl.

Inserted in-between the main features were forgettable "humorous" Chop Chop fillers. Earlier, some of these had been drawn by the great Jack Cole of Plastic Man fame, but by the fifties he was long gone and so was any reason for these stories to go on. While in the Blackhawk adventures his offending depiction was at least sometimes offset by a display of Chop Chop's heroics, intelligence, and nobility of character. But in these cartoony fillers the attempts at humor usually depended on Chop Chop being portrayed as child-

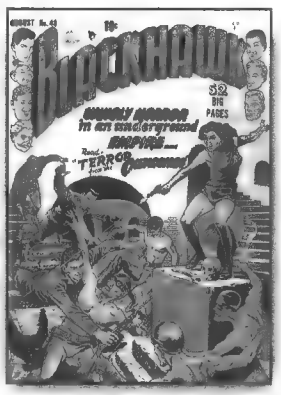
YOU'VE BEEN SHOOTING AT THE ZIP-OUT LINING FROM OUR UNIFORMS! WE LEFT THEM TO ENTERTAIN YOU WHILE WE SLID DOWN THE STEEL CABLE WE CARRY IN OUR BELTS!
YOU'RE OUT-NUMBERED TWO-TO-ONE! KILL THEM, PACK!
I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE! BUT I'LL GET YOU YET!
LOOK OUT...!
SACRE MON ZERE WILL BE ENOUGH LEFT EVEN IDENTIFY!

HAWK
IT'S PROBABLY BETTER! BROVINA CAN IDENTIFY THE HUNTING PACK MOB AND DEAL WITH THEM UNDER A DECENT, HONEST GOVERNMENT! OUR JOB IS DONE!
WHEN KILLERS STALK OUR LOYAL BAND WE LEAD THEM ON, THEN MAKE OUR STAND! WE'RE BLACKHAWKS!

like, naïve, and even downright dumb… all the while butchering the English language! And on top of that—they just weren't funny. Even as a very young kid, I flipped past these page-wasters, moving right over them to get to the good stuff!

Unholy Terror

Blackhawk #43 (August 1951) features a cover with another of Crandall's wonderful groupings of fighting Blackhawks spilling down a staircase, and the most p-o'd looking villainess of all time! These comics didn't waste their time on subtlety. "Unholy Terror in an Underground Empire," screams the cover slug, "Read 'Terror from the Catacombs.'" The lead story, Crandall's assignment as usual, relates the cover tale which takes place in "an Eastern city." Its most notable feature: the Blackhawk jets strafing the bad guys with machine-gun fire. The remainder of the issue is disappointingly subpar, despite having three more Blackhawk tales—one about extraterrestrial bug-eyed brown guys in skirts and crash helmets. (Although generally the following stories would feature interesting writing and good art by the likes of Chuck Cuidera and others, it quickly becomes clear that the lead-off spot was the showpiece of the book in terms of story and art!)



Two Reed Crandall stories with intrigue and marvelous aerial staging enliven issue #44 (September 1951). The leadoff, "King of the Winds," begins in an unusual manner: the Hawks are relaxing in swimming trunks on the beach. Andre, the stereotypical Frenchman and an incurably romantic skirt-chaser, strikes up a conversation with a pretty maid. She is involved in a seeming abduction in which the Hawks intervene, which leads into an intrigue revolving around a villain who creates tornadoes to menace whole cities. Another Crandall specialty is evident here—an imaginative overhead shot of Blackhawk's jet in flight. In the second feature, "Azar's Brain," Crandall's pencils again blossom with lots of multi-figure fight scenes and dramatic air scenes. Our heroes are again led into peril by a blonde bombshell in the third Hawk tale, "Dr. Archer." As she leads them into a pretty obvious trap—supposedly to save her scientist father—Stanislaus questions Blackhawk: "Is this not unwise?" To which the ever gallant leader replies: "Perhaps.... it isn't polite to ask a lady too many questions!" Huh? Our faith in the big guy's common sense is quickly restored, however, as we learn he suspected an ambush all along. The Boys in Blue again get to slug their way out and emerge victorious! The fourth (untitled) story features a *good* girl, the beautiful (and clingily-dressed) red-haired Timris, who is to be executed for murder in the country of Malvania. The Hawks rescue Timris at the last moment, clear her name, and unmask the power-mad premier who framed her in order to seize the reins of government.

Fantastic Fiends, Mad Machines and Evil Schemes

The claim to fame of issue #45 (October 1951) is a dramatic Crandall skull-in-clouds splash panel introducing a tale of an assassin on Blackhawk Island itself in "Island of Death!" The lead story in #46 (November 1951) squares the Blackhawks off against the "Death Patrol," led by Amora, a Crandall-rendered babe in goggles, aviation hat, and hot pants(!). This is truly high adventure in the style of a 1940's serial! He loads the tale with lots of action shots, hand-to-hand combat on airplane wings, dynamic parachuting figures, and fights in the water around a downed floating plane. This story is particularly violent: Blackhawk gets pistol whipped by three baddies while the very nasty Amora laughs, "When we have finished with you, you will be *wishing* for death!" The cover—illustrating this story—is Crandall at his action-packed best.

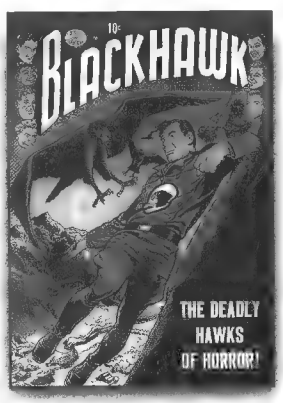
Blackhawk #47 (December 1951) leads off with "Men from the Future!," a Crandall masterpiece. Said future-men are of course not really from the future, just another super-scientific private criminal army, led by a sinewy Crandall blonde with bare midriff and high heels. Once again the villainess, having captured six of the team, succumbs to Blackhawk's fatal charm and hits on the handsome hero: "You may rule with me as my consort, or perish with your comrades!" (Crandall's scenes of femme fatales in seducing mode are priceless!) Rebuffs Blackhawk: "All things considered, and meaning no offense to you... I'll choose death!" The scorned femme vows to give him what he wants. Chop Chop is the hero of the moment, flying by and lobbing a bomb on the invaders, who are vanquished with flying fists and exposed as frauds. Cracks Blackhawk: "Those Future men suddenly ran out of futures!" Two stories of monsters—one a hoax and the other a scientific experiment gone tragically wrong—add to the issue.

THIS IS IT!
THIS IS THE MAGAZINE THEY'RE CLAMORING FOR!
NUMBER ONE ON THE HIT PARADE!
Published monthly
BLACKHAWK
EVERY ISSUE A HIT WITH A MILLION READERS EVERY MONTH!
THE MAY ISSUE GOES ON SALE FEBRUARY 23RD!
52 PAGES OF THE GREATEST ADVENTURES EVER PACKED IN ONE COMIC MAGAZINE!
52 BIG FULL WIDTH PAGES
Why take less?

House ad for Blackhawk #40 (May '51) "hawking" the magazine like a song on the hit parade.

Bad Girls & Killer Sharks

Crandall's "Hawks of Horror" is the feature in #48 (January 1952) with mechanical bombing hawks and an undercover villain at the international "Citadel of Science." Often Blackhawk stories featured altruistic organizations such as this or the "United World Council," adding to the international flavor of the series. The follow-up involves the Reds drugging and torturing Stanislaus in "Confessions of the Blackhawks"—and the team slugging its way out of a prison behind the Iron Curtain against the usual insurmountable odds.



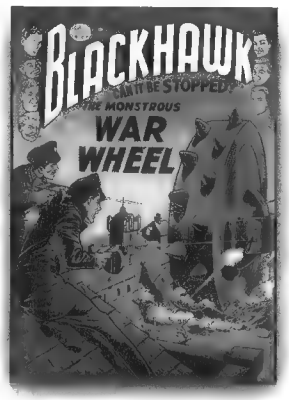
Crandall created another sultry bad girl in #49 (February 1952) with "Hell Divers." This time his villainess, Valkyrie, resembles a Wagnerian refugee, complete with blonde braids and horned helmet. In the same issue, in "The Waters of Terrible Peace," a Hedy Lamarr-ish South Pacific Island princess drugs both the Blackhawks and the bad guys with a soporific water and tries to use the head heavy to steal her people's gold. But the stalwart Blackhawks overcome the drugging, explaining: "People who are dedicated to helping others have a will too strong for the water to hold!" Another recurring Blackhawk theme: the triumph of the will in the cause of right!

The *Blackhawk* title really begins to hit its stride in issue #50 (March 1952). That issue introduces possibly the classic Blackhawk villain—Killer Shark. In his original Crandall-generated incarnation, he has pointy razor-sharp teeth, a leering villainous face, and leads a private squadron of marauders in amphibious shark-planes on raids of nameless Eastern European towns. To locate and confront the Sharks, the Blackhawks masquerade as quaintly-dressed, smocked-and-bereted characters at a carnival. Again the Crandall touch with costuming comes through entertainingly. As ever, an apocalyptic fist fight climaxes the story—and Killer Shark "apparently" gets fed to his pet shark!

Blackhawk #51 (April 1952) had no Crandall art but did feature, in "Root of Evil," a typical femme fatale—Dr. Leona Carr, a woman of science whose lab-wear looks more like the Dragon Lady and who spends her free time fomenting Communist revolt among South American Indians. Reed Crandall returned in #52 (May 1952) in "The Incredible Invasion," wherein an unnamed Eastern European democracy is fooled into a takeover by Red armies—until the seven Blackhawks even the odds against the heavily armed invaders.

The War Wheel!

A succession of thoroughly memorable issues begins with #53 (June 1952). Crandall knocked himself out with a great cover and the accompanying story for "The Golden Mummy." Staged in the North African desert, the tale's giant, super strong namesake clashes with the Hawks and turns out to be—surprise!—a robot! The art is filled with dramatic staging and lighting and is inked excellently, probably by Crandall himself.



In issue #54 (July 1952) the cover-featured "Terror in the Jungle," seems to have undergone some changes between cover concept and storyline. The wild Crandall cover features Blackhawk in a canoe slugging it out with apparently African natives; the lead story concerns itself with a South Sea Island tribe! The Hawks are summoned by the educated chief of primitive Anatoa ("I met him while he was going to school in London," says Blackhawk) to foil a Red takeover. This story offers the usual Crandall treats: imaginative fight groupings, dramatic angles and lighting, convincing exotic costuming and locale, a beautiful Polynesian heroine, and a jowly, *really* homely villain.

Blackhawk #55 (August 1955) ranks as my all-time favorite Blackhawk cover and possibly one of the all-time great comic covers, period. Illustrating "Red Ransom," Reed Crandall's inspired draughtsmanship (and some inspired coloring) jumps off the page with a dynamic Korean War battle scene—Blackhawk gunbutts his way through the Red army! The excellent accompanying tale takes the Blackhawks into Communist China itself, where Chop Chop's uncle is being held for ransom in a political scam. The team gets captured and a Chinese colonel brags about a new Russian secret weapon being built nearby. Of course, they escape in a flurry of fisticuffs. The uncle is freed but risks his life to reveal the site of the weapon. In a crisis of decision, Chop Chop realizes they must bomb the factory—with his brave and unselfish uncle inside—to save the Free World! The touching story ends with the Blackhawks blinking back tears as they jet home (presumably the Chinese air defense command was asleep at the time) with grim-eyed resolve to continue the "fight for freedom!"

The two backups are fun thrillers, one about a Leonardo DaVinci-wannabe who invents death machines, and the other a tale of intrigue with Blackhawk undercover in hostile Rugaria aided by a Betty Page-lookalike operative.

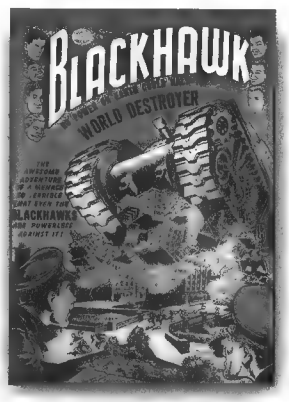
The classic "War Wheel"—destined to turn up in Blackhawk comics for the next fifteen years—is delineated by Crandall on the cover and in the opening story in #56 (September 1952). But his art really blossoms in issue #57 (October 1952) with the voraciously anti-Red "Slavery in Siberia!" From this point on, Crandall apparently did his own superb inking. His work begins to look like the art he would contribute to EC. His art on "King Cobra" in #58 (November 1952) is excellent—again, a very animal-like plug ugly villain—despite a rather mediocre storyline.

While #61 (February 1953) featured no interior Crandall, it did feature three excellent Blackhawk action yarns—no fantastic critters or other silliness, just political villainy and daring-do by our heroes! A wonderful over-the-top Crandall-penciled cover (just look at the size of that tank crushing a city!) illustrates "The World Destroyer," an entertaining yarn that ends with the title villain being crushed by his own tanks. The Hawks pursue "Stalin's ambassador of Murder" in a great escapade; they engage in "political dialogue" with various Red terrorists in their own inimitable two-fisted style! And finally the team fights the whole Chinese army way behind enemy lines with "Guerrilla—The Unknown Hero."

Crandall's Last Hurrah

Unfortunately, after issue #61, the title began a slow and gradual slide in quality. But there were still a number of bright spots in the series to come. Notable among Crandall's last hurrah were three leadoff stories: "Attack to End the World" in #63 (April 1953) features an exciting splash page with a "monstrous ship of shining metal" and a dramatically-staged story of ersatz spacemen (really "Red super-scientists," natch!) trying to disarm the Free World.

"The Flying Submarines" in #64 (May 1953) opens with a marvelous fight-scene splash: pirates and Blackhawks spilling all over the deck of a ship! Crandall shows his usual flair with costume and setting as well as some very nice rendering of architecture in the lost continent of Atlantis. Dashing heroism still abounds. In one remarkable scene, a captured Blackhawk, in a beautifully-drawn firelight sequence, sheds his shackles by putting his manacled leg *into the fire* to soften the chain!



"The Red Executioner" in #66 (July 1953) sparkles with some of Crandall's all-time best fight scenes in the splash and nicely-designed L-shaped climactic panel. The title menace, a classic leering lean-and-hungry villain, offers to assassinate the Hawks for one million dollars each—quite a sum in 1953!!! (Anyone who needs to know if he succeeds hasn't been paying attention...)

Reed Crandall's last appearance as a Blackhawk artist came in #67 (August 1953). By then, he had made his first appearance as an EC artist, in *Shock SuspenStories* #9 (June/July, 1953) and would go on to create possibly the best artwork of his career in fifty-seven stories over three years for the various titles of William Gaines. The Quality label—and their *Blackhawk* title—would persist through the end of 1956, when DC would pick up the book and seamlessly continue publication for another twelve years. The level of art would always remain high (the book continued to feature artists such

as Cuidera and Dick Dillin) and for a year or so, the stories still occasionally sparkled; but generally the Blackhawks were to go through unwelcome changes. The villainesses continued through the Quality years, gradually becoming more contrived—with names like "Sovieta" and "Communa"—and less interesting.

By the mid-fifties, with a change in society's viewpoint, the Communist menace was played down. Chop Chop finally was given some dignity, losing his embarrassing racial stereotype—but sadly he also became much less interesting. The Blackhawk jets became longer and sleeker and no longer resembled any real-world aircraft. In fact, the entire Blackhawk universe became more and more a fantasy world, ultimately populated with aliens and monsters and super-villains, all of them completely non-political. The menaces became more powerful but with so much less personality. And increasingly the dashing, quick-fisted, militaristic aviation heroes became bland anachronisms.

I feel that DC's efforts to keep the team flying were admirable but misguided. To a real fan of those marvelous early-fifties adventures, it was actually painful to behold the final throes of Blackhawk as he and his team were turned into unconvincing, somewhat colorless figures, and finally in the 1960s into ludicrous superheroes.

I would like to think that it was time for those daring and gallant cinematic heroes to regain their dignity, climb into their classic planes and fly off forever into the sunset, singing their cocky songs and screaming "Hawkaaaa!" for one final time.

And to the kid inside of me who has not yet grown up, those enchanting tales of the Blackhawks' glory days—when the country seemed much more innocent and the line between good and evil seemed so clear—will always bring a chill to my spine, no matter how often I re-read them!

Thanks to The Steranko History of Comics, *Vol. 2. by Jim Steranko (Supergraphics, 1972) and "The Propwash Patrol Flies Again," by Dick Lupoff from* The Comic-Book Book *by Don Thompson and Dick Lupoff (Arlington House, 1973).*

CAPTAIN AMERICA ANNUAL

(Continued from page 45)

tor legend, it was only distributed in Canada, and I have never heard of anyone in the US having bought one or come into possession of one without a Canadian provenance. There is also the legend about how comics from the US during World War II weren't allowed across the Canadian border. Since the book has copyrights to both countries, the point is rendered moot. My guess is the contents were already US copyrighted by Timely at the time the book was first published.

Subsequently upon reprint in b/w, the inscrutable Universal Crime Stories Inc. had the contents copyrighted in Canada for distribution there. At 25¢, buying this annual must have been a financial challenge for most young fans. After all, you could buy 2 ½ regular books for that price…and in color, and not reprints!

So, what would have been the attraction? Maybe parents thought it was a coloring book to mollify the kiddies on long drive to Aunt Edna's house in Banff. Whatever the logic, the outcome was very likely that not many sold and damn fewer survived. Estimates range from 10-15 copies extant, and Ernie Gerber gives it an "8" out of 10 scarcity.

And the book is such a "chunk" anyway. World's Best #1 is only 100 pages, and it is huge! The Cap Annual packs a whopping 132 pages—two 64 page books plus 4 cover pages! The format is notable too. It was published with "extra width," is squarebound, and has "regular cover stock" paper (thinner than usual) rather than the "cardboard" style covers of other early Golden Age Annuals. All this makes for a book that is quite fragile in the hand, vulnerable in a stack, and victim #1 in storage! And all that adds up to a book that is an exception of survival! Maybe the paper drives in Canada were more effective (albeit lower print runs) or perhaps Canadian mothers—loathing the violent content as much as American mothers—"patriotically" handed over Junior's funnybooks to the scrap pile.

So the mystery of the Cap Annual continues. We know what it looks like (format etc.). We know what's in it and what books it reprints. And we know it really isn't an "annual" per se…because it has no periodicity or even an indicia! (Maybe we should call it the *Captain America Squarebound* instead of the *Captain America Annual*?).

But we still don't know where it fits in to the overall scheme. So I'll continue to ponder this strange and wonderful Timely offshoot…and to appreciate the chance just to get hold of a pretty neat squarebound "rarity." (If you have any insights that I've overlooked, please share them with me via *CBM*.)

And who knows…maybe next time a collector's "target of opportunity" presents itself, I'll be able to come up with a shrewder opening line than "Wow! Where did you get THIS?"

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

(Continued from page 19)

why it took so long for Western heroes to become popular in comics, when they already had made it big in the other popular media of the 1920s, '30s and '40s. But it's no puzzle at all why the Old West as a favorite for fictional heroes didn't last much beyond the 1950s, except for the enduring popularity of a few major authors such as Louie L'Amour.

The B Western films died out by the mid-1950s; Westerns on television retained their popularity through the 1960s before meeting the same fate. Western paperbacks, which replaced the pulps as low-cost reading matter for the masses, took drastic plunges in popularity by the 1970s after years of huge popularity.

Have you ever been to a paperback exchange and noticed the condition of the Westerns? They are inevitably tattered because they have been read and exchanged many, many times, mostly by older men. Dealers have sometimes asked me to find them Westerns. "And the condition doesn't matter, as long as they're complete," they'll almost always say. "Just bring us some that we don't have."

The same, of course, can't be said for the Western comic books some avid fans still collect today. And that will be the subject of the second installment next issue!

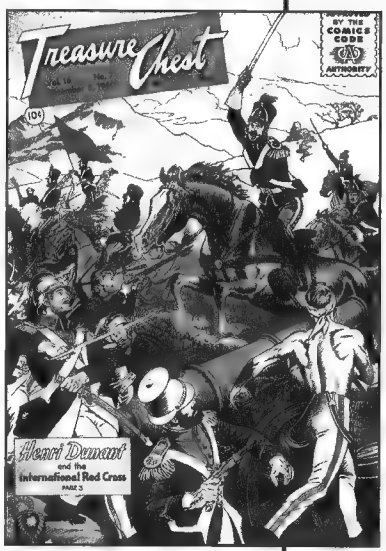
Hi Yo, Silver, Away! Or, to put it another way, Happy Trails to you…until we meet again!

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

R. Crandall

(Continued from page 36)

the late 1950s, Crandall worked on several jobs with his old EC friend and fellow artist Al Williamson. This included work for Atlas and various comics in the *Classics Illustrated* series. In 1958, at the suggestion of Al Williamson, Reed teamed up with past EC acquaintance George Evans in turning out complete 45 page books for Classics Illustrated. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Oliver Twist* were just some of the Classics they worked on together. They also joined forces on several Dell movie edition comics such as *Hercules Unchained* and *The Thief of Baghdad*. It was a fast, good working relationship from 1958 to about 1962 and as George Evans later remarked: "We worked together on quite a bit of stuff and that guy's style and approach is so powerful that even things that I penciled and sent out to him to ink… everybody thinks it's Reed Crandall. He was always fun to work with and by working over his stuff I learned a lot about drawing.



CREEPY & EERIE

In 1959 Reed Crandall left New York and returned to the plains of Kansas. By 1960 he had moved his mother and himself into an apartment located on Sycamore Street in Wichita, Kansas, and had secured a steady job with religious comic publisher George A. Pflaum. Pflaum, located in Dayton, Ohio, had published *Treasure Chest*—a bi-weekly comic distributed to Catholic schools—since 1946. Over the next twelve years Crandall would pencil, ink and letter numerous stories and covers for this publication. Most of these dealt with famous historical and religious world events and people.

In 1964, once again through the help of Al Williamson, Reed finally got his chance to try his hand at book illustration by producing all the drawings for Canaveral Press' hardcover editions of *Tarzan and the Madman* and *John Carter of Mars*, both written by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Crandall's work on these books was well-received by Burroughs fandom and he was soon hired to turn out a number of illustrations for new Canaveral editions of *The Gods of Mars* and *Swords of Mars*. Unfortunately, the publisher went out of business before the books could be published and most of the illustrations eventually saw print in various fanzines, magazines and Russ Cochran's *Edgar Rice Burroughs Creepy* magazine (the first issue had not even come out yet)… a story entitled: "Spawn of the Cat People." For me (a hard-core EC fan/addict), it was like stepping into a time machine, traveling back to 1954, and witnessing Reed Crandall working on another great horror job for Bill Gaines. His style of drawing and fine-line inking was as solid and sure as ever. It was incredible! Over the next few years I visited Reed on several more occasions, each time getting to see his latest story project… each visit more exiting than the last.

Then in 1965, Reed was contacted by Wally Wood to help out with his new *Thunder Agents* title and I remember Reed working on several of those pages too. In between the Warren magazine work and the Thunder Agents work, Reed always seemed to have a story in the works for *Treasure Chest Comics*. These were always very interesting to look at because they were based on historical events. Reed referred to this work as his "bread and butter" account. *Treasure Chest* paid good page rates and always had plenty of work for him… he was appreciative of that.

In 1967 I went into the Navy for four years and kind of lost track of Reed. I came back to Wichita in January of 1972 and, as I later found out, Reed had just left for the East Coast. From 1972 to about 1974 Reed was living up in Callicoon, New York, near his good friend Al Williamson. He returned to Wichita in 1974 and it was shortly after that I heard he had suffered a stroke and was in the Veteran's Hospital. I called the hospital and found out that Reed was in a dormitory with several other convalescing patients. Eventually, I got him on the phone and we spoke for about five minutes. His breathing was labored and at first, he didn't remember who I was. Finally a spark of recognition came into his voice, as I wished him a speedy recovery. He seemed amazed and appreciative that someone (anyone) had called to check on him and say hi.

In 1976 I went to visit him after he had moved into the Seneca Manor care-home. As I recall, he wasn't too happy about being there at first, but later, he seemed to have adjusted to the more restrictive lifestyle. I usually brought along a few comic books or Warren magazines for Reed to autograph and look over during my visits to Seneca Manor. He always seemed to enjoy looking through them, and would often show me things as well. He would go to a drawer in his dresser and pull out several magazines that he had managed to hold on to for many years; a copy of Jim Steranko's *History Of The Comics*, Vol. 2, the EC fanzine *Squa Tront* #2 and 3, and a couple of the King

Features *Flash Gordon* comics.

By now Reed didn't seem to remember much about the early years of his career, or even some of the other talented people he had been closely associated with. It appeared the stroke had robbed him of a great deal of memory and energy. But he always perked up a little bit and smiled happily at

(Continued on page 58)

R. Crandall

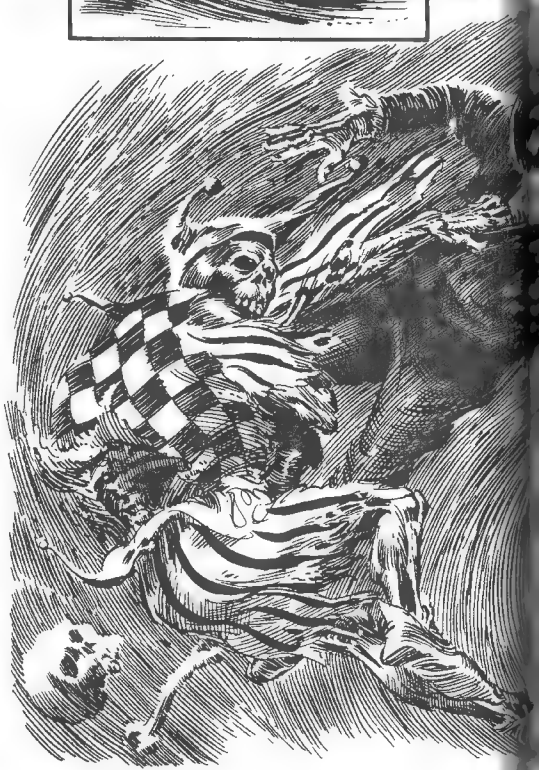
Library of Illustration hardcover books.

Many wonderful opportunities began opening up to Reed Crandall in 1964. Aside from his new found popularity with the Burroughs fans, he also was contacted by *Famous Monsters* publisher James Warren. Warren was pulling together some of the top talents of the comic field to help produce the first issue of his new black and white horror comic-magazine called *Creepy*. Reed, along with Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, Roy Krenkel and other fine artists were chosen to participate in this new venture that debuted on magazine racks across the country on October 25, 1964. Warren soon followed with the short-lived war comic magazine titled *Blazing Combat*, and two other horror magazines titled *Eerie* and *Vampirella*. Crandall made a big hit with the fans of these magazines and over the next eight years turned out some of his very best work.

When Editor, Archie Goodwin began adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe stories for *Creepy*, Reed was called in to handle the art. His superb handling of "The Cask of Amontillado" from *Creepy* #6 remains one of his greatest achievements in comics. This macabre tale by Poe takes place in the catacombs of the Montresor family where the wines and ancestral bones are kept. Reed lovingly captured the dark, dank, underground catacombs by drawing in excess every brick, spider web and rat in this strange story of a man in search of Amontillado wine who winds up getting buried alive behind a wall of bricks by his friend. The lighting and staging of the story, along with detailed rendering of thousands of bricks in the walls and floors of this underground maze, make this an all time favorite Crandall classic.

Another great Poe story adapted by the team of Goodwin and Crandall was the ever popular "Tell-Tale Heart," done in eight pages, that appeared in *Creepy* #3. "The Curse of the Full Moon" from *Creepy* #4 is a great example of Crandall's ability

The incredible, breathtaking, and unrivaled pen and ink detail used in "The Cask of Amontillado!" (published in Creepy #6, Dec 1965) is among the most highly sought-after and collectible of all Reed Crandall original art.



NO! MY LEGS! CAUGHT ON SOMETHING! PULLING ME UNDER! NOOOOOOOOOO!
NEARLY HALF A CENTURY! HALF A CENTURY TO THE DAY AND NO MORTAL HAS DISTURBED THIS RAMPART ... NOT SINCE MY POOR FRIEND FORTUNATO QUENCHED HIS THIRST HERE FOR RARE WINES!

Another example of Crandall's penchant for perfectly illustrating Edgar Allen Poe horror stories for Warren Publishing is the classic "Tell-Tale Heart!" (selected panels below) originally published in Creepy #3 (1965).

TRUE! I AM, AND HAD BEEN NERVOUS! DREADFULLY NERVOUS! BUT WHY WILL YOU SAY I'M MAD!
JUST SIT STILL TILL THE DOCTOR COMES.
THE NERVOUSNESS SHARPEN MY SENSES! DIDN'T DESTROY— DIDN'T DULL THEM! PARTICULARLY MY SENSE OF HEARING... HIGHLY DEVELOPED! I HEARD ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH ... AND... ELSEWHERE!
HOW, THEN, AM I MAD? LISTEN! LISTEN CLOSELY! OBSERVE HOW HEALTHILY, HOW CALMLY, I CAN TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY...

the mention of two names in particular: Lou Fine and Al Williamson. Reed had a great deal of respect for both these fine artists and although he probably hadn't been in touch with Lou Fine since the 1940s, Al Williamson had kept in close contact through the years and of course was instrumental in helping Reed get various jobs along the way.

The last time I saw Reed was in early 1982. He had moved to a different care-home by then which was nicer than Seneca Manor in some respects. I remember arriving one afternoon and waiting at the front desk nursing station while they announced I was there. Usually Reed would come walking down the hallway. The stroke had left him with a slight limp, but he managed to do all right. On this particular day the nurse informed me that I would have to wait a little longer this time as Reed was outside doing his daily exercise—jogging around the building! I said, "What?!"

Sure enough, the nurse told me Reed had been jogging and doing some calisthenics for some time now. He seemed to enjoy it and it was doing him a world of good. She also told me that Reed had become fairly popular with some of the ladies at the home and participated in many of the group activities offered there. It sounded to me like Reed was getting along quite well and I was glad to hear it.

Within a few minutes Reed came through the front door and was starting to cool down from his workout. He seemed to be in a much more jovial mood that day as we talked and visited, mostly about how things were going with him. Apparently he also had a couple of girlfriends now and in general seemed to be enjoying life much more than before. I felt very happy for him. That was the last time I saw Reed Crandall.

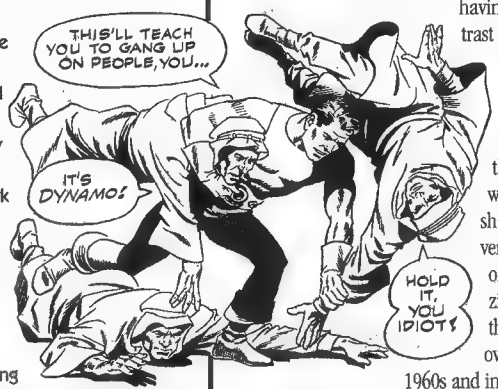
Now, sixteen years after his passing, I often think back to those visits and wish that I had spent more time with Reed. He was a great guy to know and an incredible artist—one of my favorites, that's for sure. Thank goodness he left behind a tremendous amount of published work in the comics for us fans to enjoy. Many of the younger collectors and fans of today don't recognize the name Reed Crandall, and that's unfortunate. Many have never seen his work because a lot of it has never been reprinted. Fifty years ago Reed was producing some of the finest illustrative comic art of his life and was already revered and respected by many of his peers.

The truth is, Crandall originally hoped to enter the field of "slick" magazine and book illustration. As it happened to many others before him, he got side-tracked into a totally different field of art in order to survive and sustain an income during the recovery years right after the great depression.

But a career "left turn" influenced a lot of comic book greats. When I first began meeting and interviewing some of the older comic artists who had worked during the 1940s and 1950s, I was constantly amazed at how many of these gentlemen would tell me that it was the work of Reed Crandall that had the heaviest influences on their careers. Their justification for this opinion? Reed Crandall had an honest, no-nonsense attitude about drawing. A straightforward approach to comic art "panelology," with the talent and drive of a "fine" illustrator.

And that's what Reed will always be to me... a wonderful, kind and extremely talented, "fine" illustrator whose work will not soon be forgotten.

—ROGER HILL



Dynamo panel from Thunder Agents #4 (Apr 1966) was penciled by Crandall & inked by Wally Wood.

to instill great depth into his stories through the understanding of how light reflects off people and settings. This story has a lot of moonlit night scenes which always makes it even more difficult to place lighting. Reed also understood the importance of having a good balance on contrast with black and white in these stories that had to work without the aid of color. He also drew a number of Warren stories that utilized a diluted ink wash/gray-tone method of shading. His work was always very popular with the readers of Warren's comic magazines and eventually most of these stories were reprinted over and over during the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

In October of 1975, Warren published a Summer Special, *Creepy* #74, that reprinted nine classic tales of horror by Reed Crandall... a must-have item for the Crandall collector. Even the older, earlier issues of *Creepy*, and *Eerie* are very affordable and can still be found occasionally at conventions for modest prices.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

From 1965 to 1968 Crandall provided his talents to Wally Wood's *Tower Comics* line. Woody was an old friend of Reed's from their EC days, and a big fan of his work. For the debut issue of *Thunder Agents* #1 in November 1965, Reed penciled and inked the ten-page origin story for Thunder Agent... Noman! He also penciled several Dynamo stories that were inked by Woody and his assistants. Twenty-five years after he had started out drawing superheroes for Iger and Eisner, Crandall proved that he still had what it took to draw muscle men. Due to distribution problems, the Tower line folded in late 1969, but by that time Reed had already gone on to other endeavors.

In April 1968, it was reported that Editor Dick Giordano had tried to get Reed Crandall to return to doing the *Blackhawk* comic book for DC Comics. Reed actually had the script in his possession for several weeks before returning it with a note saying he would not be able to do the work. The script was then airmailed to Pat Boyette. By that time, Reed was already working on the *Flash Gordon* comic book that he had taken over from Al Williamson. Williamson had relinquished his work on the comic in 1967 when he decided to do the *Secret Agent X-9* newspaper strip. Reed took over the character and over the next three years was able to produce four issues. That's about all he could squeeze into his schedule while still maintaining his account with *Treasure Chest*.

In 1971 he drew a seven page horror story for *Marvel's Creatures on the Loose* #13. This story, entitled, "Where Walks

the Werewolf," was completed just a few months before Reed decided to move to Calicoon, New York, where he took an apartment near the home of his longtime friend Al Williamson. Reed enjoyed being able to walk over to Williamson's studio where he occasionally brought his *Treasure Chest* and Warren magazine work to work on. While in Calicoon, Reed also designed an insignia for the town fire department's fire truck for which special ceremonies were held to award Reed a special certificate of appreciation.

From 1971 to 1973 Reed's drawing abilities became noticeably uneven. To some extent, a gradual deterioration had been apparent during the late 1960's period. His figure work especially, that had always shown a graceful anatomical correctness was now becoming awkward and distorted. Something was definitely wrong. Even his basic layouts began to suffer, especially when compared to some of the brilliant work he had produced only a few years before. His depth perception and inking ability began to slip as well. The combination of age and personal problems were beginning to take their toll. Reed was not one to kid himself about it either. His last published story entitled "Soul and Shadow" appeared in *Creepy* #58 (December 1973). It marked the end of Crandall's long career in the comics field. A career that lasted 33 years all told.

After returning to Wichita in 1974 Reed gave up drawing comics and took a job with the Pizza Hut Corporation as a janitor and night watchman. In 1975 he suffered a stroke and was hospitalized for a period of time in the Veteran's Hospital, then later moved into a care-home for the elderly. Not one to sit idle, Reed kept busy with brushes, ink and watercolors occasionally producing portraits of friends or their children to help bring in a little extra pocket money. The truth was, he really didn't want the money, he just wanted to continue drawing and working.

In 1982, after a morning of feeling ill, an ambulance was called to the care-home to transport Reed to the hospital. While the nurses were walking him out the front door to the ambulance, he suffered a massive heart attack and died instantly. It was September 13, 1982. He was 65 years old. He was buried in a little cemetery in Newton, Kansas. The final chapter had closed on the life of one of the most talented artists who ever worked in the comics.

Reed Crandall left behind a great legacy of work which has yet to be fully appreciated and understood by historians and researchers. As the greats of comic book history continue to be recognized and credited in the later half of the 1990s, I'm sure you'll agree that the name Reed Crandall deserves a permanent place in the Comic Book Legend's Hall-of-Fame.

WHERE WALKS THE WEREWOLF!
NIGHT FILTERS DOWN THRU THE SPACES BETWEEN THE TREES, TWISTING AROUND THE GNARLED BRANCHES TO SETTLE, AT LAST, UPON THE SHOULDERS OF TWO NERVE-TAUT MEN--
DESPERATE MEN WITH A MISSION---
I STILL THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED BACK AT THE LAB, MARTIN-- YOU'RE LIABLE TO GET BADLY HURT OUT HERE!
YOUR CONCERN IS NOTED, CRAIG-- BUT THIS IS MY PROBLEM AS MUCH AS IT IS YOURS--- MORE SO, IN FACT---
FOR IT IS MY LIFE THAT WILL END IF WE FAIL!
COME THRU THE DARK PORTAL WITH---
STAN LEE EDITOR * LEN WEIN WRITER * REED CRANDALL ARTIST
LETTERING BY SAM ROSEN

Splash page for "Where Walks the Werewolf" from Creatures On The Loose #13 (Sep 1971, above) written by Len Wein and drawn by Reed Crandall.

Crandall's chilling Bavarian-night werewolf attack panel from "Curse Of The Full Moon!" published in Creepy #4 (1965).

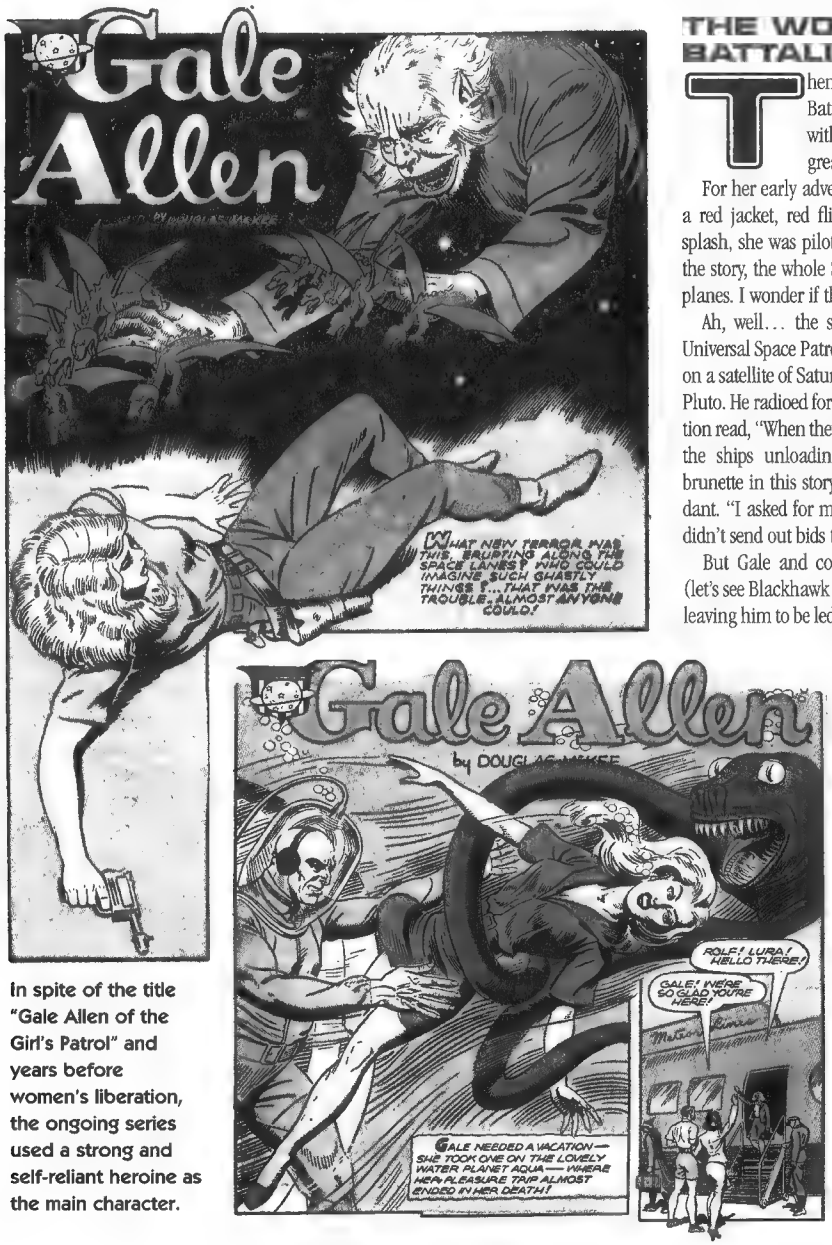
Roger Hill is a nationally recognized comic art historian and researcher specializing in the study of the artists who worked in the comics field from the 1930s to the 1960s. He is currently working on several book projects and doing specific research on Matt Baker, Rudy Palais, Bob Powell and Mac Raboy.

(Continued from page 27)

publishers. Neither made it past their third issue. *Planet* hung on for thirteen years!

Of the characters in #1, Flint Baker was the only one to appear in *Planet*'s last issue. The stories improved after a while, and Briefer, who did only the first story, was supplanted by artists such as Blum, John Celardo, Joe Doolin, Dan Zolnerowich, and Rudy Palais. By the time it underwent a format change with issue #21, it was a decent enough strip, and Flint and Mimi were seasoned space swashbucklers. It was a miracle Mimi survived; when she and Flint were headed back to Earth in #3, their rocket ended up on Pluto. She confessed that she "changed our course… it's more exciting than going home!"

A guy named Planet Payson turned up in the lead spot in #2, with good art by George Tuska. He reappeared in issued #6-8 and was gone. There were several one-shot strips in the early issues: Amazona—Mighty Woman, Tiger Hart, Kenny Carr, Jim Giant, Space Admiral Curry. Mostly, what they signified was that *Planet Comics* was still in search of a working lineup.


Gale Allen
by DOUGLAS WAKEE
WHAT NEW TERROR WAS THIS BRUPTING ALONG THE SPACE LANES? WHO COULD IMAGINE SUCH GHASTLY THINGS?... THAT WAS THE TROUBLE... ALMOST ANYONE COULD!
Gale Allen
by DOUGLAS WAKEE
GALE NEEDED A VACATION— SHE TOOK ONE ON THE LOVELY WATER PLANET AQUA— WHERE HER A-PLEASURE TRIP ALMOST ENDED IN HER DEATH!
ROLF! LURA! HELLO THERE!
GALE! WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

In spite of the title "Gale Allen of the Girl's Patrol" and years before women's liberation, the ongoing series used a strong and self-reliant heroine as the main character.

THE WOMEN'S SPACE BATTALION

Then came Gale Allen of the Women's Space Battalion, in issue #4. She was more in line with what *Planet* would come to stand for: great-looking women in space!

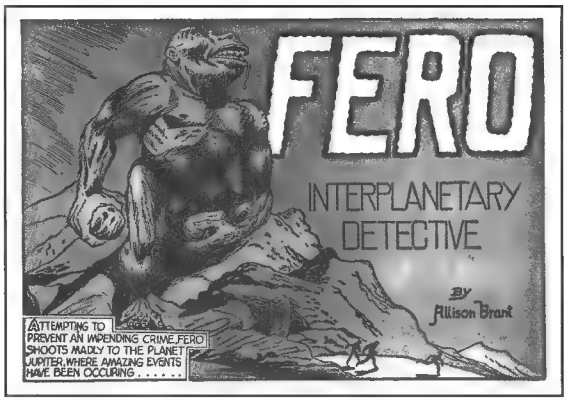
For her early adventures, however, Gale was modestly clad in a red jacket, red flight helmet, and yellow jodhpurs. On the splash, she was piloting a twin-prop airplane. In fact, through the story, the whole Space Battalion was piloting twin-prop airplanes. I wonder if this one wandered in from *Wings*…?

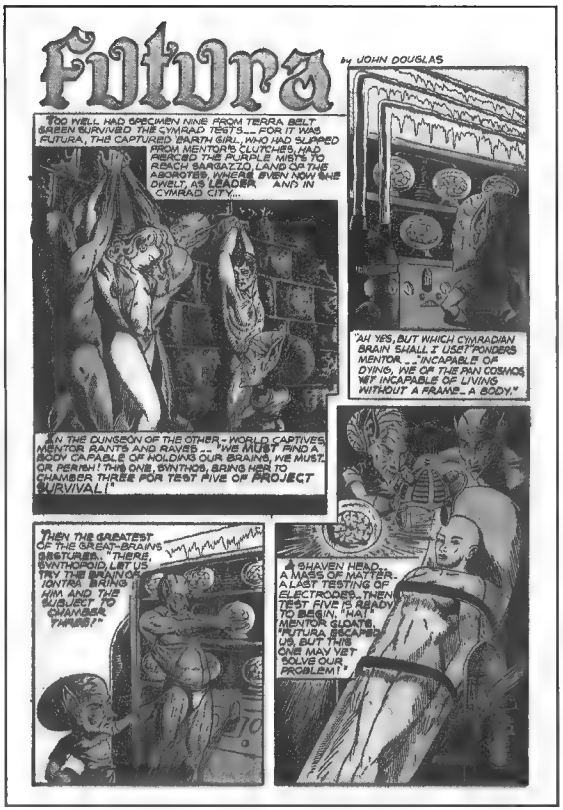
Ah, well… the story opened with Capt. Jack North of the Universal Space Patrol picking up an S.O.S. from a scouting party on a satellite of Saturn, who were being captured by the pirates of Pluto. He radioed for a battalion to buoy up his brigade. The caption read, "When they arrive, his is shocked [yes, shocked!] to find the ships unloading nothing but WOMEN!" Gale, a pretty brunette in this story, handed him an order from the commandant. "I asked for men to help fight pirates!" groused North. "I didn't send out bids to a knitting circle!"

But Gale and company piloted their prop-planes to Pluto (let's see Blackhawk do that!), on which Jack's plane cracked up, leaving him to be led away by "giant Plutonians." "Letting them take him without even putting up a fight!" remarked Gale. "So that's he-man stuff, eh?" Within two more pages, the WSB had bombed the pirates' city, freed the men, and won high praise. Gale herself broke off to ray down to Jack's captors personally and rescue him. When the two soared back over the pirate city, they found it deserted and destroyed. "Guess your girl friends have been defeated!" said Jack, misinterpreting the situation.

"Defeated!" snapped Gale. "You'll find your fine, male squad safe, on Saturn—*now*, who's a sissy?"

The art and story improved in the second story, set in the far-flung future of 1990 A.D. The strip was now titled Gale Allen of the Girl's Patrol, which made her sound like a crossing guard. On page one, we were introduced to a recurring


FERO
INTERPLANETARY DETECTIVE
By Allison Brant
ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT AN IMPENDING CRIME, FERO SHOOTS MADLY TO THE PLANET JUPITER, WHERE AMAZING EVENTS HAVE BEEN OCCURING . . . . .


Futura
by JOHN DOUGLAS
TOO WELL HAD SPECIMEN NINE FROM TERRA BELT GREEN SURVIVED THE CYMRAD TESTS... FOR IT WAS FUTURA, THE CAPTURED EARTH GIRL, WHO HAD SLIPPED FROM MENTOR'S CLUTCHES, HAD PIERCED THE PURPLE MISTS TO REACH SARGAZZO, LAND OF THE ABSOROTES, WHERE SHE NOW SHE DWELT, AS LEADER AND IN CYMRAD CITY...
"AH YES, BUT WHICH CYMRADIAN BRAIN SHALL I USE? PONDERS MENTOR..."INCAPABLE OF DYING, WE OF THE PAN COSMOS, YET INCAPABLE OF LIVING WITHOUT A FRAME... A BODY."
IN THE DUNGEON OF THE OTHER-WORLD CAPTIVES, MENTOR RANTS AND RAVES -- "WE MUST FIND A BODY CAPABLE OF HOLDING OUR BRAINS, WE MUST, OR PERISH! THIS ONE, SYNTHOS, BRING HER TO CHAMBER THREE FOR TEST FIVE OF PROJECT SURVIVAL!"
THEN THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT-BRAINS GESTURES... "THERE, SYNTHOROID, LET US TRY THE BRAIN OF IONTRA. BRING HIM AND THE SUBJECT TO CHAMBER THREE!"
A SHAVEN HEAD, A MASS OF MATTER... A LAST TESTING OF ELECTRODES... THEN TEST FIVE IS READY TO BEGIN. "HA!" MENTOR GLOATS, "FUTURA ESCAPED US, BUT THIS ONE MAY YET SOLVE OUR PROBLEM!"

villain: Prince Blaga Daru, "notorious interplanetary buccaneer" and aspiring conqueror of Earth. He sent his warships towards Earth, interrupting a date Gale and Jack North had at a soda fountain. This time Gale got captured, and Jack had to rescue her. In the interim, Blaga tried to get better acquainted with Ms. Allen:

Gale: Still the same old Blaga—Oh-h keep away from me!

Blaga: You know how I feel about you since we met. Marry me, Gale, and I'll make you the wealthiest girl in the universe!

But Gale wasn't that kind of girl. Jack burst in to Blaga's apartment and walloped him. Gale grabbed the baddie's gun arm when he went for his blaster. In the last panel, after Gale expressed her gratitude, Jack snarled, "Your entire squadron is captured! Bah! Women should stay at home where they belong!"

Gale apparently didn't forget that remark. After issue #19, Jack North wasn't heard from again. Blaga Daru appeared three more times and finally bit the dust in issue #11. Bob Powell handled the first ten issues artistically. He was succeeded by a batch of artists, including Al Bryant, Art Saaf, and Lee Elias. Gale got prettier post-Powell and the romance between her and North deepened, until he dropped out of sight.

And her costumes got sexier.

By issue #12 Gale had traded her jodhpurs for an open wrap-around skirt, underneath which she wore tights. (This issue also contained one of the more memorable lines from her series. When observing a toad-man held captive by amphibian people, Gale commented, "Looks like these fish people have grafted gills on the horny guys!") By the next issue she was wearing shorts, a blouse, boots, and a blaster. In the next, she wore a modified red bathing suit with a neckline cut down to her belt. Her artists changed a lot before issue #28, and each gave her a different outfit… sometimes a more conservative midi, other times a short Supergirl-like outfit with a cape. Finally, in #18, Gale and her Girl Squadron got their standard uniform: a bikini, boots, and a ray-gun.

Apparently, fighting off menaces in space was hot work.

By 1942, Gale was a gutsy, pulchritudinous battler, leading her crew of curvy combatants through alien adventures galore. Jack North was forgotten. But, in issue #23, she met a handsome space pirate named Captain Saracen, who bore more than a passing resemblance to Clark Gable. She captured him, he broke free, and she and her girls got captured. Gale challenged Sarcen to a sword duel for their freedom. In a steel-clasher out of *Captain Blood*, Gale faced her foe, but was "no match for the super-skill of Saracen! …But wait! Did his foot slip on the stair? Suddenly he is staggering back, and Gale's red thrust bites into him!" The smiling Captain Saracen admitted defeat, and let Gale and her charges go. Luckily enough, that wasn't his last appearance. He came back as a roguish ally to Ms. Allen in issues #24 and 26, and then, sadly, was never seen again.

Gale carried on through issue #42. By that time she had lost the Girl Squadron and become a space pilot and female troubleshooter. She was dumped after that in favor of the Futura strip, but she still had a legion of supporters who wrote in to the Vizigraph (*Planet*'s lettercol) and asked where she had gone. The editors replied that she was on a seven-year space voyage. Gale reappeared in reprints in *Planet* #65-70, but not in an original story. Decades later, Americomics picked her up for some pastiche adventures, of which I know practically nothing.

A NEW WAVE OF ARTISTS

Several other short-lived strips appeared in *Planet*'s early days. Briefly noted: Fero, Interplanetary Detective (#5-8) was a "ghost detective" strip which, with a little finagling of the first story, was converted into a SF strip; the finagling, in issue #5, amounted to saying the werewolves and vampires in the story came from Pluto.

Crash Parker and His Zoom Sled (#6-16) was begun by Charles M. Quinlan of Catman fame, and was about a rocket inventor, his pal "Wheel" Barrow, and their adventures in space with Zoom Sled, kind of a rocket on runners.

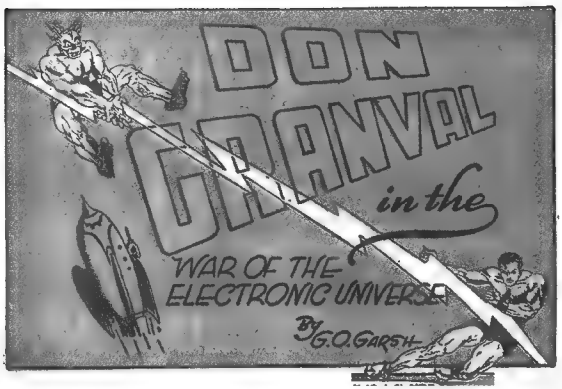
Don Granval (#6-11) featured a young, mustached scientist who had adventures in a sub-atomic world with his girlfriend, Claire.

And Cosmo Corrigan (#9-11), AKA Cosmic Corrigan was a nicely drawn (by George Tuska) and written strip about a hell-raising, clueless pilot who got stationed on Pluto for pulling one stunt too many, and had some fairly funny adventures.

Through all of this, *Planet* was improving. Their bad artists were gradually supplanted by decent ones, and, by the mid-War years, *Planet* was a competent-looking book. Artists such as Tuska, Lee Elias, Murphy Anderson, Joe Doolin, Lily Renee, Leonard Starr, and Fran Hopper passed through their pages, with Dan Zolnerowich handling covers from #10-25 and Joe Doolin doing a masterful job on most from #26 on. (Lily Renee spelled him on issues #33, 35 and 39, and #66-73 were by Maurice Whitman.) It was Good Girl Art, all right, but Fiction House did a good job of it.

STAR PIRATE
by LEN DODSON
THE PLAN WAS PERFECT. THE PRIZE - ONE MILLION CREDITS. THE BAIT: A BEAUTIFUL GIRL. STAR LEFT NO LOOPHOLE FOR HIS CANNY ENEMY. YET TOO LATE HE LEARNED THAT BOYD WAS A PAST MASTER OF THE DOUBLE-CROSS....
SET SET, BLACKY. WE'LL YANK 'EM AS THEY ROUND THE CORNER.
WHOOYA WANTA STICK YOUR NOSE IN THIS BIZ, FOR? ALWAYS LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE
WHAT THE...

Murphy Anderson's work on Planet's Star Pirate demonstrated his early penchant for rich textures, complex machinery, and bizarre alien creatures... and is still acclaimed today as some of the most interesting sci-fi art of the Golden Age. collector demand for later Planet Comics is at an all-time high primarily because the issues contain such innovative Anderson art... most of which is virtually unknown to Silver Age collectors.



MURPHY ANDERSON AND STAR PIRATE

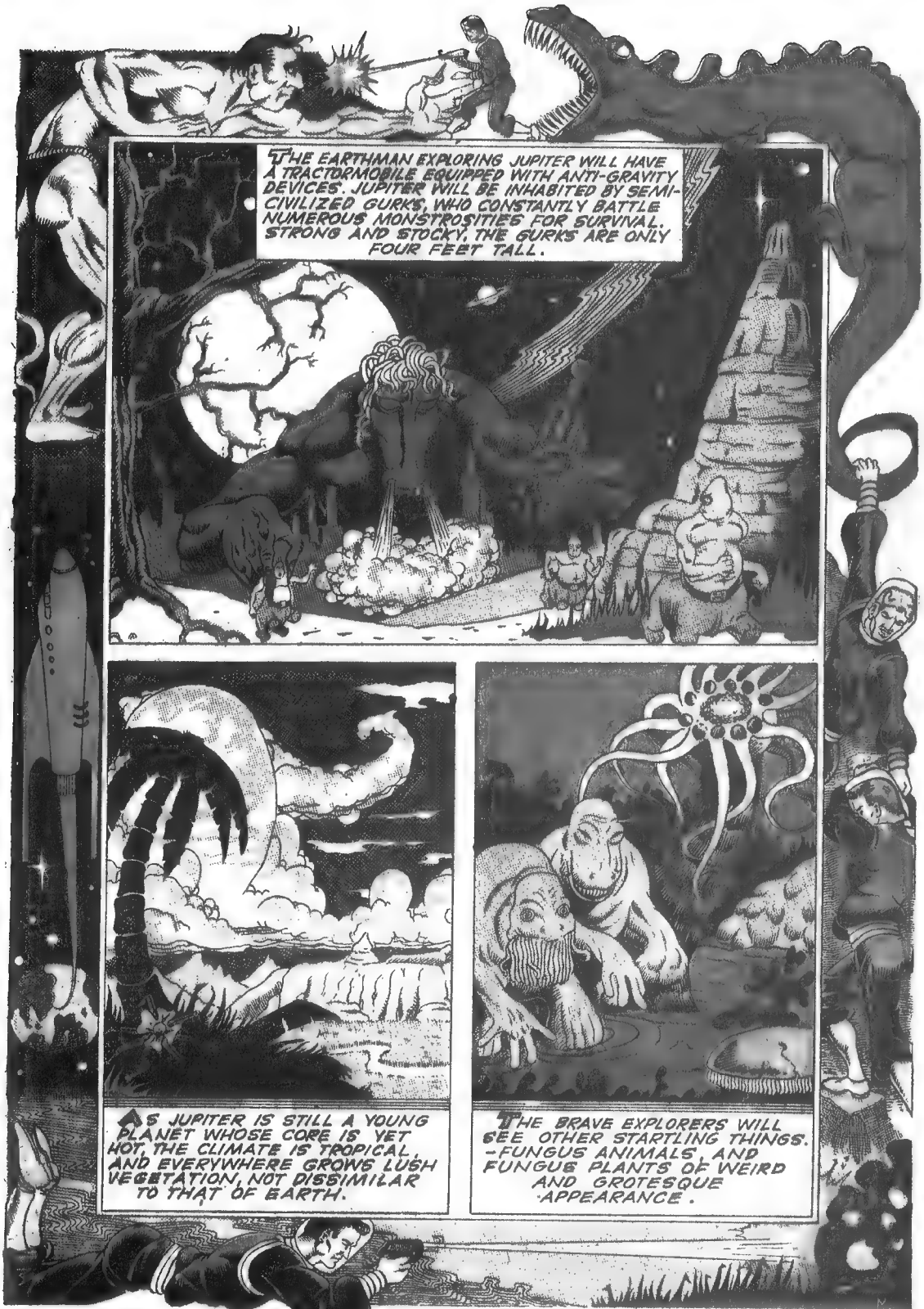
Finally, with issue #12, *Planet* started assembling the lineup that would carry it up to its last days. The moribund features were out, and The Star Pirate was in.

Star Pirate (which began in issue #13) was the next character in *Planet*'s winner's circle, and he was quite fun. We never learned what his real name was, but his friends called him Star. Star Pirate scoured the spaceways in search of a little ill-gotten gain, as long as it didn't hurt anybody much except competitors. He had to keep clear of both the law and other outlaws, but managed to do enough unofficial jobs for the Space Patrol that they often looked the other way once he wound up a case.

Star Pirate usually worked with a partner, but changed them whenever he got tired of them. His first aide-de-camp was Trodelyte, Trody for short, who was the size and shape of a human in his premiere appearance, except that he had only one eye, and it was in the middle of his forehead.

The first Star Pirate artist was George Appel, who did #17-31, being spelled at times by Ray Isip and George Tuska. His second was a very young

STAR PIRATE
by LEN DODSON
INTO THE GLOOMY MISTS OF CHRALD KALENDOS PLUNGED STAR PIRATE... DOWN... DOWN AMONGST THE HORRID, SLINKING SHAPES CALLED HUMANOIDS... EVIL GUARDIANS OF THE VENEL CLAIMS - AND SPAWNED OF DESTRUCTION AND DOOM!


THE EARTHMAN EXPLORING JUPITER WILL HAVE A TRACTORMOBILE EQUIPPED WITH ANTI-GRAVITY DEVICES. JUPITER WILL BE INHABITED BY SEMI-CIVILIZED GURKS, WHO CONSTANTLY BATTLE NUMEROUS MONSTROSITIES FOR SURVIVAL. STRONG AND STOCKY, THE GURKS ARE ONLY FOUR FEET TALL.
AS JUPITER IS STILL A YOUNG PLANET WHOSE CORE IS YET HOT, THE CLIMATE IS TROPICAL, AND EVERYWHERE GROWS LUSH VEGETATION, NOT DISSIMILAR TO THAT OF EARTH.
THE BRAVE EXPLORERS WILL SEE OTHER STARTLING THINGS. -FUNGUS ANIMALS AND FUNGUS PLANTS OF WEIRD AND GROTESQUE APPEARANCE.

Murphy Anderson.

Murphy (who would make his name at DC doing *Spectre, Hawkman,* and *Strange Adventures* and doing the Buck Rogers strip for the newspapers) was learning his chops at the time; about the only way you'll be able to recognize the work as his, on the earlier issues, is by the signature. Nonetheless, it is looser than his later work, and has a spirit of fun about it. Also, Murph was no slouch at drawing gorgeous women even back then, and that skill served him well at Fiction House. He did almost all the Star Pirate stories in #33-51. After that, John Celardo, Maurice Whitman, Leonard Starr, Jon Rosenberger and others kept the Jolly Roger in flight through issue #65.

Anderson's best art jobs came on the two-page features titled "Life On Other Worlds." These featurettes speculated on what the inhabitants of other planets would look like, and it was a given that every planet and moon of the solar system was inhabited. Murphy did a convincing job on Martians, Saturnians, Jupiterians (they didn't know the term "Jovian" I guess), and all the rest, with decorative borders and delineation that made unreality look believable.

Star Pirate and Blackbeard had a lucky habit of running into half-clad female space pirates and getting the best of them. The ladies kept appearing and neither Star nor Blacky complained. It was a relief from having to dodge the Space Patrol, anyway.

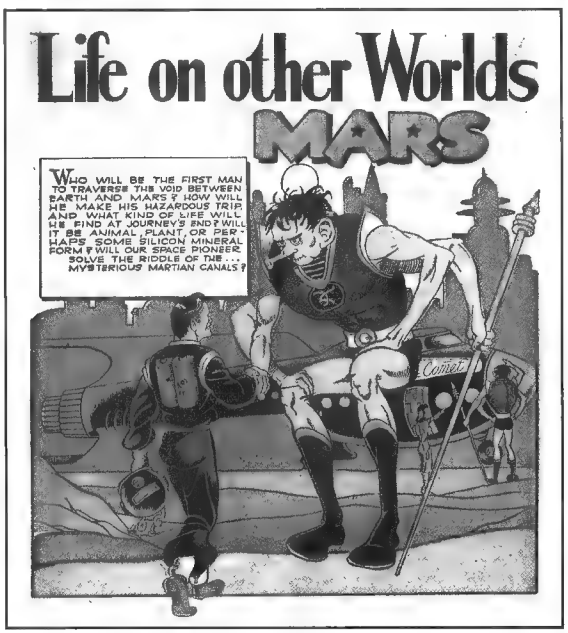
But, as good as he was, Star Pirate wasn't headline material… just a decent backup strip. *Planet* was in need of a good lead feature, and Fiction House knew it. So the experimentation went on.

MARS
A WORLD WENT MAD AT HIS MANIACAL WHIM; A UNIVERSE OF SLAVES BOWED TO HIS EVIL WILL — AND MARS WAS MASTER OF MEN! -BUT THEN A GIRL DEFIED HIM. HER NAME WAS MYSTA -AND THE MOON HER HOME!

Mysta of the Moon eventually replaced Mars God of War, as a leading feature… giving Planet artists and writers even more opportunities to satisfy reader appetites for interplanetary cheesecake.

THE SPACE RANGERS!

Reef Ryan (#13-25) was another strip that crept into the *Planet* orbit. It was more or less in the same ballpark as the Flint Baker strip, with a planet-hopping hero and his girlfriend. So, when space limitations decreed that one or the other strip be dropped, editor Malcolm Reiss (or whomever) decreed that, henceforth, Flint Baker and Reef Ryan would be teamed as The Space Rangers (#24-64, minus #38 and 62). As such, Reef and Flint were troubleshooters for an interplanetary government. The two


Life on other Worlds
MARS
WHO WILL BE THE FIRST MAN TO TRAVERSE THE VOID BETWEEN EARTH AND MARS? HOW WILL HE MAKE HIS HAZARDOUS TRIP AND WHAT KIND OF LIFE WILL HE FIND AT JOURNEY'S END? WILL IT BE ANIMAL, PLANT, OR PERHAPS SOME SILICON MINERAL FORM? WILL OUR SPACE PIONEER SOLVE THE RIDDLE OF THE… MYSTERIOUS MARTIAN CANALS?

starship jockeys hadn't met each other before then, and the teamup didn't last as long as one would think. Before long, the writer brought in two new Space Rangers to liven things up. One was a kid named Hercules, the other was the daughter of a planetary viceroy. Soon enough, Reef Ryan was dumped and Flint Baker was playing scoutmaster to Herc, who went along on every case. The stories were all right, and the art was usually good.

Reef Ryan got his revenge. After the Space Rangers strip was shelved, it came back for a last-issue appearance in #71, the only *Planet* character strip to make a final bow. Reef Ryan and Flint Baker were the heroes, and Hercules was nowhere to be seen. On the other hand, he was a growing boy, and maybe he was just the right age to go wandering into the territories claimed by Gale Allen, Mysta, or Futura....

MARS, GOD OF WAR

The first really great *Planet* strip appeared first in an issue with excellent art, a good concept, and passable writing. Mars, God of War, debuted in *Planet* #15 (the rarest issue of the run) and held on until #35. Joe Doolin did all the art. And, as usual, he did it all quite well.

The splash of the first story showed Mars, clad in Roman soldier's gear and brandishing a spiked mace, towering over a battlefield on Earth. Planes were strafing combatants, tanks were overturned, soldiers were getting bayoneted and machine-gunned by other soldiers. On the horizon, a town was in flame. A caption read:

Down through the ages, a foul spirit has infected the universe... a god of hate, creating strife through the injection of his personality into the bodies of the evil. And now, leaving his planet in chaos, this invisible horror invades Earth... Mars, God of War!

Actually, he'd been here in spirit for a good long while, certainly since

1939. And a very similar Mars had been making trouble for Wonder Woman since 1940. But the Mars of the *Planet Comics* universe was a more hands-on kind of guy. His modus operandi was to take over the body of a person who had opened himself to invasion by evildoing, and then raise as much hell as he could get away with. It usually involved warmongering on a planetary scale.

In *Planet* #15, Mars towered over a roadway, saw a hit-and-run in which a driver killed a little girl without stopping, and took over the scumbag's body. "The flyer convulses violently as Mars' spirit enters his body. Soon he is at the wheel of a great passenger rocket, hurtling through space.... Leaping up, he seizes a wrench and smashes the instrument panel.... The craft plummets down...."

We could keep quoting captions like that and get through the whole story, but that'd be cheating. The passengers of the rocket ship are killed in the crash. The only survivors are the pilots, and the Mars-possessed one tries to kill the other. They fight, and the non-possessed pilot, John Freeman, kayos his former partner. Mars tries to possess John, but his "strong will" prevents the entrance. John is convinced that some weird power underlies the incident, and takes his de-possessed partner in for a mental exam.

Mars goes shopping for another body, takes one belonging to a stickup artist, has him shoot an ambassador and his wife (apparently for fun... there isn't much method to Mars' madness in this story), and sees his host body arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. In the prison, Mars goes lurking again, sees a guard beating a prisoner, enters his form, and has him shoot the convict down in cold blood. Mars then takes it on the lam, muttering, "I'll teach those fools to respect the war god!"

John Freeman, in the meantime, confers with law officers, who are already convinced "something supernatural" is going on. John opines that they're in for "a reign of terror... the like of which America has never known!" The next caption confirms, "Freeman's prediction proves true..." Mars jumps into the body of a corrupt skyport official and blows up a rocket coming in from another nation. The nation is called Axia, and, as you might expect, the Axians speak with a German accent and call their leader "der Fuehrer." Surprisingly enough, "der Fuehrer" looks more like Stalin than Hitler. Even more surprisingly, the Axians aren't portrayed as the monsters and dummkopfs that passed for Germans in most comics of the time. But, just to keep things happening, Mars jumps into the Axian Feuhrer's body and declares war on America.

"The fiery-eyed dictator addresses his people, filling them with hate and lust for blood...." Luckily, John Freeman joins the American espionage service, is sent to Axia, and guesses the truth when he hears about the dictator's "fiery eyes"—a sign of Mars-possession. He sneaks into the Fuehrer's palace, is confronted by the big cheese himself, and knocks him out with a good right cross. Mars abandons the dictator's body, assumes solid form, picks up a sword, and prepares for battle. Freeman belts him again ("So you're the cause of the world's troubles! Take this! This too!") and knocks him off his pins. Mars goes ghostly again and retreats.

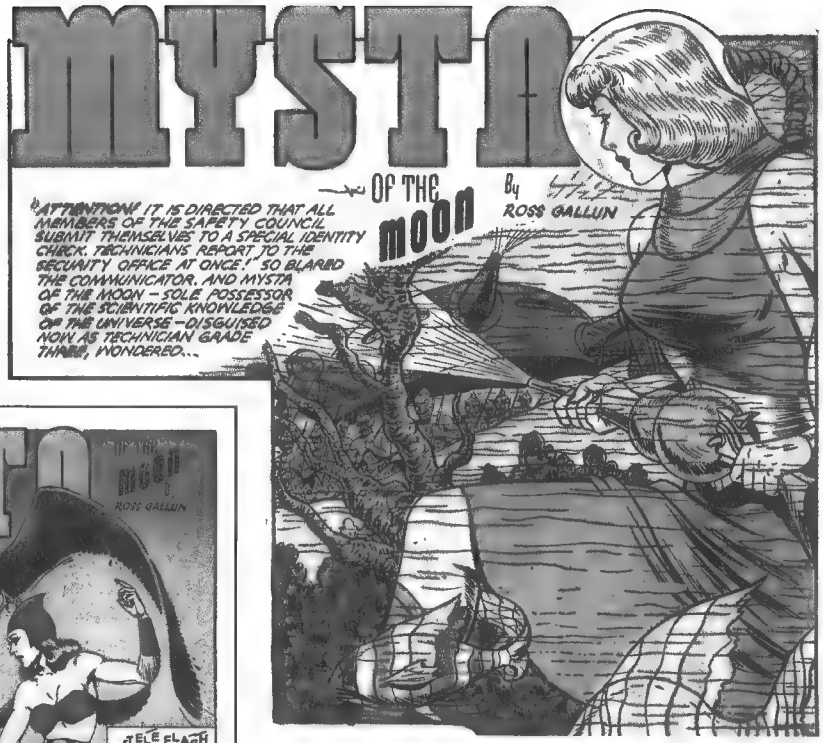
The Fuehrer wakes with a "Vere am I?" Shortly after, he signs an armistice, saying "America iss our best friend!" To top that off, the last panel proclaimed, "Once more the rising sun finds a planet at peace...," and the rays of the sun, though colored yellow, look suspiciously like those on the Japanese flag.... To be this "reasonable" about the Axis powers, a couple of months before we entered World War II, makes one consider just what was going through the writer's mind back then. But that was in another country, and besides, the book is dead. The last caption promised, "Mars, God of War, returns to sate his blood lust in the next *Planet Comics*!"

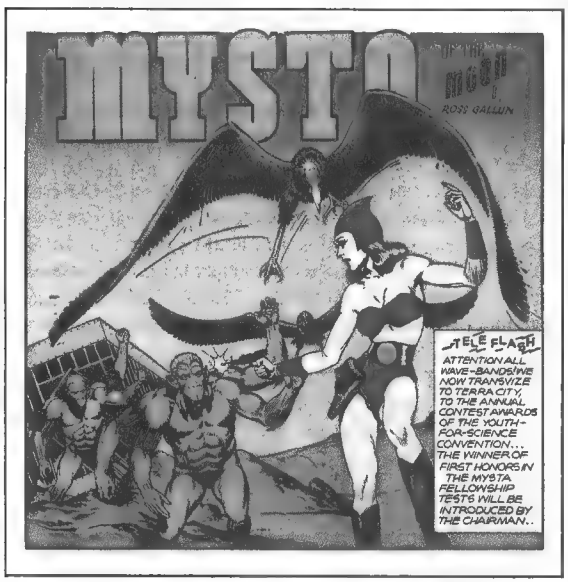
MYSTA
MOON
By
ROSS GALLUN
VOTE HUMANIST! ELECT THE SCIENTIST CANDIDATES! SUCH WERE THE ELECTION-EVE NOTICES ON EARTH. BUT TO THE MOON CAME REPORTS OF A TERROR CAMPAIGN, AND NOW...

Mars was even more impressive in the next issue, tearing apart a spaceship with his bare hands in the splash page and standing side-by-side with Death himself, while rocket ships hurtled down towards an Earth that was already aflame with war. This time, Mars managed to foment war between Earth and Jupiter, killing the father of the pacifist to make things work more smoothly... or maybe just because he had a *jones??* for it. Jupiter invades big-time, devastating America's factories, navy, and cities, led invisibly by the war god himself. Peace is ultimately declared and the Earth is eventually saved (of course).

Mars raised hell on Earth and other worlds for his 21-issue stay, challenging the heroes and heroines of each adventure to thwart his warlike ways. A woman soldier named Telma, her Amazonian corps, and her boyfriend Bruce fought Mars in *Planet Comics* #17-19. They gave way to differing casts of characters on different worlds. But always, Mars was seeking the key to plunging the universe into wars, and he only seemed a step or two away from finding it. Like Kirby's Darkseid, Mars

demonstrated the appeal of a powerful villain. Unfortunately, *Planet* didn't seem to pick up on it very much in the other strips. The nemeses of the other players were usually one-shot nonentities, memorable only if they were lady pirates in bikinis. If Fiction House had put out a one-shot similar to *Daredevil Battles Hitler*, in which all the *Planet* good guys and gals teamed against Mars, it would've been a classic to rate a single


MYSTA
OF THE moon
By ROSS GALLUN
"ATTENTION! IT IS DIRECTED THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE SAFETY COUNCIL SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO A SPECIAL IDENTITY CHECK. TECHNICIANS REPORT TO THE SECURITY OFFICE AT ONCE!" SO BLARED THE COMMUNICATOR. AND MYSTA OF THE MOON – SOLE POSSESSOR OF THE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE – DISGUISED NOW AS TECHNICIAN GRADE THREE, WONDERED...


MYSTA
ROSS GALLUN
TELE FLASH
ATTENTION ALL WAVE-BANDS! WE NOW TRANSVIZE TO TERRA CITY, TO THE ANNUAL CONTEST AWARDS OF THE YOUTH-FOR-SCIENCE CONVENTION... THE WINNER OF FIRST HONORS IN THE MYSTA FELLOWSHIP TESTS WILL BE INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN..

line in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. But Charlie Biro wasn't writing Fiction House comics.

By issue #22, Joe Doolin apparently picked up a lesson from Street and Smith's Shadow Comics, and rendered the figure of Mars in blue overlay, without any black lines. It neatly symbolized his nature as a spirit of discord, and Mars stayed blue through his last appearance. The art kept getting better, and, even though the stories followed more-or-less the same pattern with Mars getting beaten on the last page, it ended up being one of *Planet*'s best strips.

But apparently the editors decided that there was only so much mileage in a villain strip. In *Planet Comics* #35, the splash panel depicted the blued-out Mars standing behind a confident blonde heroine who was clad only in red halter, shorts, gloves, and sandals. (For *Planet*, that was almost overdressed.) The caption read:

"A world went mad at his maniacal whim; a universe of slaves bowed to his evil will—and Mars was master of men!—But then a girl defied him. Her name was MYSTA—and the moon her home."

In a horrifically prophetic sequence that seemed to forecast the 1960's college riots, we saw a mob of students waving torches, yelling "Down with the autocratic intellectuals!," smashing up a university, and looting libraries, labs, and the campus chapel. "And books—the printed greatness of mortal men, records of the past and dreams of the future, flame in bonfires to please the wanton mob!" A professor, in mortarboard and gown, held up his hands before the rioters, trying to reason with them. A student pulled out a ray gun, snarled, "Class dismissed, professor—for good!," and murdered him on the spot.

Seconds later, Mars left the body of the killer, noting that this was Earth's last university. "Without knowledge, the fools are no better than pigs! ...But no—I remember a laboratory on the Moon... Mars, you grow careless—"

The god of war hied himself hither to the Moon. The author explained:

Long years ago, a scientist foresaw the coming madness... and so he mysteriously disappeared— The same day, two infants were stolen from their Plexiglas cribs. Exiling himself to the Moon, Dr. Kort built a laboratory to house all culture of the decaying universe... There also, he reared the two children, instilling in their eager minds the knowledge their fathers scorned! And now comes MARS—

Inside the domed structure, Dr. Kort was giving the two kids, now young adults, a sleep-tutelage session with a phonograph record pumping a lesson directly into their brains through a mechanical hookup. Kort noted that this was their final lesson, and that they had absorbed all the knowledge stored in his great library. "They will plant anew the seeds of learning in the universe... the god of war is licked!"

"Hmmm... is he?" thought Mars, observing invisibly. He set a robot (one of two Kort had made for the kids) to attack the threesome, but Mysta, awakened, tripped the metal man into a disintegration pit. Since the robot was the intended property of Norg, the boy, he was miffed. Mars sensed that he was the weakest of the threesome, and entered him. Kort announced that they

would soon begin a tour throughout the universe, spreading knowledge like Johnny Appleseed planting tree seeds.

After they boarded Kort's starship, Mars, in Norg's body, attacked the old man and bludgeoned him to death. Then he laughingly smashed the scientist's lab to bits and set it afire. He almost bluffed his way past Mysta. But, somehow, she managed to see the blue-overlay form of Mars superimposed over Norg, and grabbed for Norg's gun. They struggled for the weapon. Mysta twisted it until the muzzle pointed under Norg's chin, and pulled the trigger.

"My almost-brother!" mourned Mysta. "I did not want to kill you, but Mars stole your soul. I will avenge you, Norg—the god of war is my sworn enemy!" Mars ghosted away, thinking, "She is as strong as I—strong with knowledge of culture. But I will not be gone for long! Twenty years, perhaps! And then—the God of War returns!

In the last panel, Mysta stood defiant, in front of her robot, which towered a good two heads above her. The author noted, "She, a living temple of Man's essential goodness, is his last hope! Can Mars still win?"

Apparently not. Mars made a token appearance on the splash page of the next story, the first one under the logo Mysta of the Moon. Except for a couple of reprints, he never made it back again.

MYSTA OF THE MOON

Mysta hung out her shingle in *Planet* #36 and made it all the way to #61, clad in her interplanetary bikini and backed up by her mighty robot. Her first mission was to save a space station whose crew had been turned into mesmerized zombies by Superbrain, a big-headed villain with mental powers. His main helper was Bela, a good-looking brunette in a one-piece bathing suit. Her main function was to wrestle with Mysta for a gun, and she lost. Mysta released the crew people who had yet to be turned into zombies, who were either bald men in swimming trunks or women in bikinis. In the end, Mysta felled Superbrain with his own weapon, a green fungus from a gun. Later, Mysta had the liberated space-station crew paint Superbrain's ship with two coats of quick-drying fungus and watched the ship rot.

The next issue, she battled a mad scientist and his army of men who were actually living plants. She watered them until they burst all over him, and dissolved him with their acid. And that's about all I want to say about that one.

Mysta soon developed the ability to infuse her spirit into another person's body, like Mars (or Deadman). This, along with her telepathically-controlled robot, helped keep the stories interesting. In later issues, she gained an assistant in Bron, a reformed bad guy. By *Planet* #55, she assumed a secret identity as Technician 3A, aide to one Dirk Garro, and thus she spent her last six issues.

Mysta's art was usually quite nice, with Fran Hopper's seven issues between #37 and 49 probably being the best. Other "Mystafiers" included Doolin, Ruben Moreira, Charles Sultan, Maurice Whitman, Matt Baker (#55-59), and Harry Sahle, her final artist. She made a reprint appearance in *Planet* #69 and has not been heard from since.

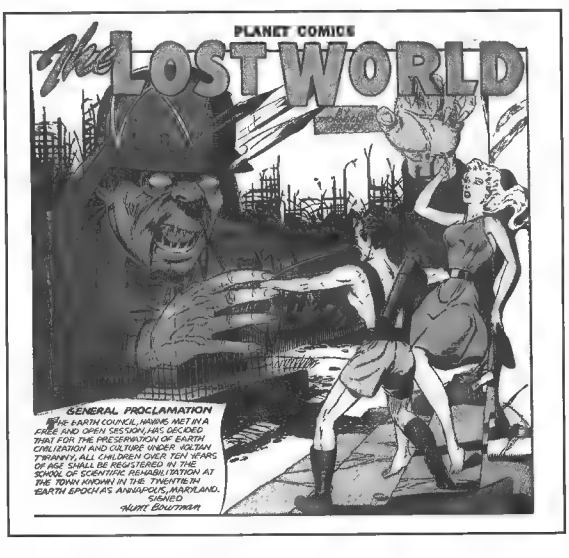
Norge Benson took over as comedy relief for *Planet* in issues #12-32. Al Walker, who did a similar job with Greasemonkey Griffin in *Wings*, illustrated #12-22. The remainder were done by Fran Hopper, Jim Mooney, and Lily Renee. Here's how it went: Norge Benson, described as "a 'Wrong-Way Corrigan' of the space-ways," got stranded on Pluto with his intelligent pet polar bear, Frosting, for company. There was also a large tribe of talking penguins (know as Plutocrats), menaced by the tough, cigar-smoking penguin, Slug. Norge had various adventures with the penguins of Pluto, picked up a bikini-clad, frost-resistant girlfriend named Jolie in #20, and encountered characters like Mr. and Mrs. Weatherman and The Snomads. It was a nice little strip, if a bit chilly at times.

THE VOLTAS AND HUNT BOWMAN

And now... the most famous *Planet* strip of all. With its coming in issue #21, *Planet* finally found the strong headline strip it was hunting. Quite appropriately, then, the hero was named Hunt Bowman. And the feature was named... Lost World.

The splash panel of the first Lost World story was devoted to a Chinese-style dragon breathing smoke and threatening an unconscious blonde woman and her protector, a guy in a green Robin Hood outfit with a red cape. Hunt Bowman had an arrow nocked to his bow and was ready to let fly. A caption clued us in:

Only one man could win the fight for survival of Earth in the 23rd Century... this superb specimen is Hunt Bowman, a lonely archer knowing nothing of his forebearers' (sic) sciences... But when Hunt's tireless search for a human mate reaches a fantastic climax when a wild voyage through


PLANET COMICS
The LOST WORLD
GENERAL PROCLAMATION
THE EARTH COUNCIL, NAVAHS, MET IN A FREE AND OPEN SESSION, HAS DECIDED THAT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF EARTH CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE UNDER VOLTAN TYRANNY, ALL CHILDREN OVER TEN YEARS OF AGE SHALL BE REGISTERED IN THE SCHOOL OF SCIENTIFIC REHABILITATION AT THE TOWN KNOWN IN THE TWENTIETH EARTH EPOCH AS ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND.
SIGNED
HUNT BOWTMAN

space ends on a world the universe forgot!

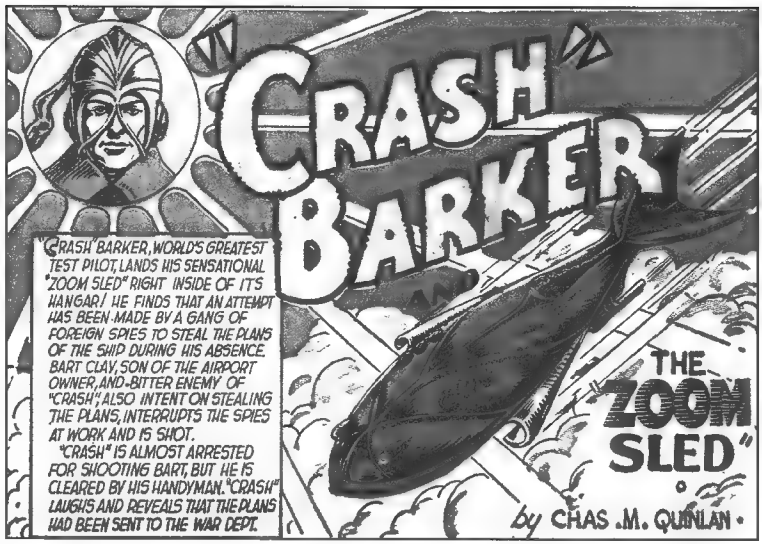
In the ruins of Chicago, Hunt stands, muttering that he hasn't seen another human since his brother died, three years ago. His reverie is interrupted by a spaceship that lands nearby. The occupants emerge and are revealed as sallow-skinned pygmies know as Voltamen, plus one blonde human woman. Iqor, leader of the Voltas, says that they will capture him and put him on exhibit back on Volta, after starving him almost to death to give

the Voltans the impression that Terrans are an inferior race. Hunt, rightly thinking that the Voltamen are the ones who killed his brother, lets fly an arrow, but Iqor destroys it with a disintegrator gun. After a brief fight, the Voltans stun Hunt with a globe of noxious "comet vapor," and he is taken aboard the Volta ship.

Later, with the vessel already in space, Hunt awakens in the presence of the woman, who asks him his name. "I was called Hunt Bowman by the last on Earth to die! But who—where are you from?"

"I am Lyssa, Queen of the Lost World," replies the girl. "My people are descendants of early space voyagers from Earth! But these brutes from Volta killed or captured all the women before they caught me. If you can break your bonds, we can escape together!"

Hunt, who has been chained hand and foot, makes a Steve Reeves effort and breaks his fetters one by one. Iqor and his two crewmen make an inspection entrance, and the two underling Voltas are killed when Hunt shorts out their electro-blaster with a blow of his chain. Iqor flees, leaps into a space-lifeboat, and takes off, telling Hunt that the Volta ship will crash on the next planet.


"CRASH" BARKER
"CRASH" BARKER, WORLD'S GREATEST TEST PILOT, LANDS HIS SENSATIONAL "ZOOM SLED" RIGHT INSIDE OF IT'S HANGAR! HE FINDS THAT AN ATTEMPT HAS BEEN MADE BY A GANG OF FOREIGN SPIES TO STEAL THE PLANS OF THE SHIP DURING HIS ABSENCE. BART CLAY, SON OF THE AIRPORT OWNER, AND-BITTER ENEMY OF "CRASH", ALSO INTENT ON STEALING THE PLANS, INTERRUPTS THE SPIES AT WORK AND IS SHOT.
"CRASH" IS ALMOST ARRESTED FOR SHOOTING BART, BUT HE IS CLEARED BY HIS HANDYMAN. "CRASH" LAUGHS AND REVEALS THAT THE PLANS HAD BEEN SENT TO THE WAR DEPT.
THE ZOOM SLED"
by CHAS. M. QUINLAN

Hunt, admitting that "I cannot read, and I know nothing about machines," turns to Lyssa, who has probably earned her spaceman's driver's license. She pilots the Volta ship to a rough but safe landing on her Lost World, which is populated by cavemen. He's overjoyed to see his own kind again. The Lost World Welcome Wagon decide, somehow, that he's after Lyssa's throne, and are about to attack him when Lyssa appears and dissuades them from doing so. One guy, a leopard-suited chap named Basil, is still unimpressed, and arranges for Hunt and Lyssa to encounter the dragon, Yclept the Spirax. Even the Voltas are afraid of the beast, but Hunt is made of the stuff of *Planet Comics* heroes, and kills it with an arrow. Afterward, Lyssa offers Hunt the chance to rule the Lost World with her, as her king. Basil takes it on the lam. Hunt, remembering a vow he made not to kill humans, lets him go.

And that was the first Lost World story.

As such, it wasn't too impressive. But the strip was still in its formative stages, and improvements were coming. Before long, Lost World would be a strip to remember… and the kids who read it back then certainly did.

Originally the title Lost World referred to Lyssa's world, and their initial adventures took place there. By the third story, though, Hunt and Lyssa were faced by a revolt fomented by Basil. They boarded the Volta spaceship they had captured, along with a scientist who was one of Lyssa's people, and headed back to Earth. By this time, the Volta-ravaged Terra was a "Lost World," and there was no need to change the title.

The Voltas changed appearances in the early episodes, becoming gray brutes of normal size in #22, and then human-looking pale-skinned beings by #23. But the conquerors of Earth needed a more impressive look than that. So, in a two-page short in #25 that was really a war bond promo (believe it or not), Hunt and Lyssa faced the new-model Voltans. These boys sported coal-scuttle helmets that identified them with America's current enemy, the Nazis. They were of normal size, but their skin was grayish-green and wrinkled, and they were meant to look somewhat like animated corpses. They also sported protruding upper or lower fangs, often as not.

But the real identifying mark of the Voltans didn't appear until some issues later. In #36, the Voltamen began to speak in Latin syntax. Like the Blackhawk's accents, it was a brilliant identifying move. At first, the new Volta speech was used spottily, as the writer(s) got used to it: "Drowned are they?" "The Earthling it is!" But, before long, the phrases like "I plan have for destroying Hunt Bowman!" were gliding off their tongues as if they were Anglicized Romans. It was such a neat bit that Dick Lupoff, in *All In Color For a Dime*, titled his fine *Planet* overview, "Me To Your Leader Take"!

Hunt and Lyssa's crusade against the Voltamen lent itself to continued storylines. One of the best began in #36, in which story Hunt and Lyssa, in New York City, fled into the Cornell Medical Center and discovered three teenage humans in suspended animation, inside glass cylinders. A Volta patrolman happened by, idly decided to throw a switch, and restored them to life. The kids, Bonnie, Bruce, and Robin by name, had a joyous reunion which was cut short by the Voltamen, and by the sight of their father's skeleton nearby. "Interesting very!" snapped one Voltaman. "You live… you die… you live… now we see if you die again!"

Before the baddies could make a move, Hunt Bowman sent shafts into their vitals and helped the threesome escape. Bonnie explained, "Our father was a great scientist, back in 2110. He made us the subjects of an experiment in suspended animation. I can't imagine why he died without waking us up again!"

Robin, a dark-haired boy, replied, "I guess it was these creatures who interrupted his work, Bonnie! Looks as if they interrupted just about everything." After Lyssa explained about the Voltamen, whom she described as "hard to kill," a Voltaman who was left for dead suddenly reared up, leveled his weapon, and blasted Bruce in the back. Hunt killed the enemy on the spot, but Bruce was dying.

At that point, Robin exclaimed, "Wait! What did Dad train me to be a surgeon for?" In a short time, he performed a brain transplant and brought Bruce back to life... in the body of the Voltan soldier! He came back to consciousness just in time to see Hunt, Lyssa, and his two siblings in front of a Voltan firing squad, bluff his way into being allowed to execute them himself, and turn his weapon on the Voltans and mow them down like ducks in a shooting gallery.

Afterward, Bruce reluctantly turned to Bonnie and asked, "Can you... can you stand the sight of me?" She responded, "You'll always be brother Bruce to me... and you know it!" The three kids walked away, arms around each other's shoulders, and Hunt, looking on, praised the bravery of his newfound friends.

As it was, though, Bruce hadn't been put into the body of just any old Voltaman. When the three teenagers came back in #38 (after a story in #37 in which Hunt and Lyssa stopped Voltans in Washington, D.C. from destroying the Declaration of Independence), they joined Hunt and Lyssa in blitzing a Volta patrol. They commandeered a Volta ship and took off, only to be halted for inspection by another enemy craft. The human-looking humans hid in lockers, and Bruce, in his Volta body, met with the boarding party. To his dismay, they knelt and salaamed him: "Hail our lost leader, Prince Guth!" "You must return to Volta! Your father, the king, dies of grief!" Playing along, Bruce brought his ship into line with the others. For the first time, Bowman's band went to the world of the enemy.

On Volta, Bruce was embraced by his body's father, Klarg, King of the Voltans. The humans were discovered and captured. "What means this, my son... Earth creatures on your ship?" asked the king. "In my joy, father," improvised Bruce, "I did not tell you... they my prisoners are!"

"Then they are a gift to me, son? You recalled my experiments on humans!" smiled Klarg, and Bruce, wide-eyed, agreed.

The Earthmen were strapped to tables in an operating room and Klarg prepared to dissect them. Bruce decided that it was time to pull a Gary Cooper, and shot his corpus's father dead. At gunpoint, he forced away the other Voltans and freed his friends, and personally piloted their escape craft back to Earth.

As might be expected, the killing of their king did not do much to improve Earth-Volta relations.

Bruce and company appeared in a spate of other stories. But by this time, Hunt's concern had shifted from just destroying the Voltan invaders to uniting the surviving Earthmen and rebuilding their government. And, despite the Voltans and their planetary allies (including the Venusians), despite the dissenters and the traitors who made life interesting for an issue or two, progress was being made.

Earth was fighting back.

The problem was that Hunt Bowman couldn't totally defeat the Voltans, unless he wanted to lose his reason for existence. So, no matter how badly they got beaten, the corpse-skinned cruddites were still hanging on through *Planet* #64, the last original Hunt Bowman story. By this time, Hunt had acquired some polish, was the de facto mayor of a city and leader of a human resistance group, and could probably see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Did he make it? Were the Voltamen finally sent packing back from Earth, cursing their foes in Latin syntax all the way across the galaxy.

No one knows. But the real question for historians is "Why did Hunt Bowman work better than the rest of the *Planet* offerings?"

Most of it comes down to the concept. In Bowman's world, humans were not space conquerors or members of a galactic federation à la *Star Trek*. They were persecuted underdogs, fighting valiantly to survive, and to win their homeworld back from an oppressor. Hunt Bowman represented our Last Great Hope, and we cheered him on for it.

But there was another factor. The razed cities, the occupying armies, the horrible engines of war, and the underground resistance movement indicated one thing: Lost World was a war story. Most *Planet* strips, being set in the future, had few ties to the reader's own era. But a kid reading Lost World could easily compare it to his own time, with Hunt Bowman's Earth a stand-in for occupied Europe. The Voltans looked like corpses, wore coal-scuttle helmets, and were fiendishly brilliant in constructing engines of war. Hitler was their soul brother.

And even today, the finely-drawn scenes of a bombed out New York, Washington, or Paris, France can send a chill up one's spine when beholding them. The Atomic Knights covered much the same ground in *Strange Adventures* almost twenty years later, and it's interesting to note that the Knights' artist, Murphy Anderson, was a *Planet* alumnus.

On top of that, Lost World just featured a lot of good action and adventure in an interesting setting with good art and better writing than most of *Planet*'s other strips. So it was that Hunt Bowman and Lost World became the best remembered strip in *Planet*... deservedly.

It's obvious that Roy Thomas, when creating Killraven for *Amazing Adventures* in 1973, was heavily influenced by Lost World. Killraven is an updated Hunt Bowman (his original outfit even looks somewhat like one of Hunt's costumes) and H. G. Wells' Martians are stand-ins for the Voltamen. But, even up against Killraven, Lost World looks pretty impressive.

Any feature we can remember over a half-century later has to be.

The writers of Lost World are lost to the ages, but it's a safer bet that Ruth Roche, one of Fiction House's most prolific scripters, worked on the strip. Jay Bixby, a noted sci-fi writer of the time, may also have been one of the scribes using the "Thornecliffe Herrick" alias. Rudy Palais, as we've noted, drew the first episode (*Planet* #21). After one-shot offerings by Ray Isip and Nick Cardy, Graham Ingels (some years before his "Ghastly" stint at EC) was the first regular artist, from #24-31. Probably the best work was done by Lily Renee, whose stint lasted from #32-49. Then George Evans took over, and rode out the strip until its end in issue #64.

GALE ALLEN & FUTURA

One last *Planet* strip deserves mention, and it's one of my favorites. When Gale Allen was sent packing she was replaced in #43 by Futura. And, though Futura wasn't quite a female Hunt Bowman, she managed to get her gutsy, beautiful little self into a horde of Flash Gordonish perils, and moxied her way through every one of them. Not a bad showing for a gal who started out as, more or less, a secretary.

The Futura strip was rendered in the "illustrated text" style of *Flash Gordon, Tarzan,* and *Prince Valiant,* without word balloons. Any dialogue was set within quotes in a caption. Rafael Astarita was probably the artist for her first five escapades, with John Cavallo taking over for #49-64. Both were very capable artists and made Futura a pleasure to look at.

And there was no question but that Futura was meant to be looked at! The lovely black-haired girl was clad only in a skimpy halter, abbreviated skirt,

and high heels in the first panel of the story. She was trotting down a deserted street of a skyscraper-filled, North Am-like city of the future, motivated by an unnamed fear. Behind her was a greenish silhouette with pointed ears and long-clawed fingers. The caption read:

Terror, blind, reasonless terror. Marcia Reynolds felt it that evening as she came home from work... one minute she was just an average girl walking down a familiar street in Titan City... and then she was swept into a wierd (sic) fantasy of horror....

Being swept into a *Weird Science* of horror would seem more appropriate, but that wouldn't happen for some years yet. Marcia checked into a police department and had the cops scan the streets for pursuers. They found none, and told her to go home. "Imagining things?" thought Marcia. "Maybe he's right... Why should anybody waylay a second-grade technical secretary? No money, no family... only a Norm-Plus rating in intelligence quota, energo-efficiency, and mating potential... Who'd be after me? Haunts and hobgoblins... Nonsense! This is Titan City, most civilized city of Earth... This is the 21st Century, not the Dark Ages."

Marcia probably underrated her mating potential, but it soon became academic. The green silhouette chose that moment to bust through her window, grab her arms, and be beamed up with her in tow to a spaceship orbiting overhead. She was shackled to a wall, and her captor looked like a cross between a goblin and a well-veined bodybuilder. His master, Mentor, was a huge-headed, shrunken-bodied Martian Munchkin who designated her as "Specimen Nine from Terra Belt Green for Project Survival! ...If you find our methods ruthless, Specimen Nine, it is because our needs are desperate... The life of our Cymrad race is at stake... strong new flesh and blood is needed to feed and house our treasures of the mind...." What it meant was that the Cymradians were looking for suitable bodies to which they would transplant their brains.

With that, the spaceship arrived on Cymradia, Mentor's homeworld. After a battery of tests were performed off panel on Ms. Reynolds, one of the bigheads admitted, "Your Specimen Nine has possibilities!" "Yes," agreed Mentor. "Give her a base-tab of 113 and mark her lab-name as 'Futura.' Take her away, K-4!"

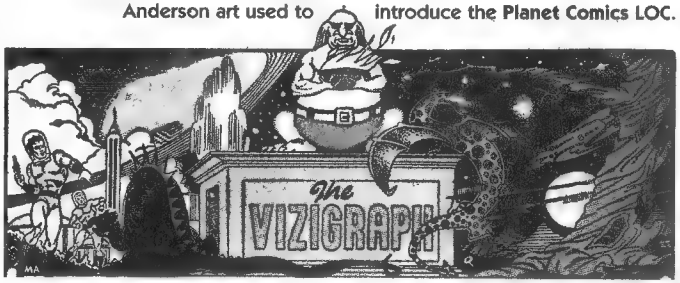
The newly-named Futura was endungeoned with a group of humans from various worlds and began plotting escape with them, exactly as Mentor anticipated ("She has leadership potential as well! Why delay her final test?"). When she and her fellow prisoners were marched out to a spaceship for transport, she saw her chance, elbowed free, and took over the ship herself, flying away. "No Earthling yet has survived this test, but perhaps—heehee—she'll surprise me!" chortled Mentor.

But Mentor got a bit more than he bargained for. She soon hooked up with a tribe of cavemen Yclept the Aborotes, fought against them and then alongside them, engineered the destruction of the Trans-Venusians that worked for their captors, and flung this challenge back at Mentor via telescreen: "Futura by your naming, Mentor... and by that name I'll conquer you. Take warning, big head... this tower is ours, and not until I lead my Aborotes to Cymradia will I return to Earth as Marcia Reynolds."

Now there was a woman worthy of Magnus, Robot Fighter!

Futura won past the dangers Mentor placed before her, including beating a Cymrad-brained human-bodied woman specially bred to destroy her. Shortly afterward, she allied herself with a race of butterfly people, captured Mentor, forced him to release his human prisoners, gained a magic sword, and engaged in final, terrible battle with the Cymradians. Project Survival was destroyed, but, alas, so were Futura's allies, who perished in a geyser of molten lava thanks to Mentor's machinations. Mentor finally met his fate in the crash of a spaceship (*Planet* #53). Futura, bikini-clad and spacebound in an escape capsule, was catapulted into further adventures on other worlds. She was captured by space pirates, smashed a slave market, and ended up as a lady pirate herself by story's end, in issue #64. One of her crewmen was the son of the pirate she had deposed, and he plotted revenge. If the previous 22 issues were any indication, he probably failed, but catapulted the plucky Earthgirl into another set of adventures.

Anderson art used to introduce the Planet Comics LOC.



Too bad we'll never see them.

By this time it was late 1949, and the ax was beginning to fall. *Planet Comics* had never made it to monthly status during its entire run. With #63 it was reduced to quarterly status. By #64, it reverted to reprints.

One issue was published dated 1950. Another single issue was published in 1951. 1952 saw three undated issues come out. After #70, in 1953, even the reprints were cut.

Fiction House decided to try a new tack with *Planet*. Since EC had made a go of sorts with *Weird Science* and Weird Fantasy by that time, and DC's *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery In Space* were thriving (to say nothing of the other numerous SF titles coming out at the time from Atlas, Avon, and other companies), they made it a non-series anthology of science-fiction comic stories. Only one of the old series, Space Rangers, crept in for a last appearance in #71. The art, by the likes of Bill Benulis and John Belcastro, was quite good. The stories weren't bad, either. But the facts of the matter were that comics were in the midst of the Wertham Era, and sales for Fiction House comics were dropping across the board.

Like scads of other publishers at the time, Fiction House decided to call it a day. *Planet* #73 (1953) wound up a 13-year run with five well-done anthology stories. The last was titled, appropriately enough, "Among the Missing."

It left behind a legacy as the first successful science-fiction based anthology comic. It left us with the memories of Hunt Bowman, Mars, Futura, Gale Allen, Flint Baker, Star Pirate, and all the rest.

Planet may not have racked up the triple-digit numbers of *Jumbo, Jungle* or *Wings*. But it wound up being the best-remembered Fiction House title of all.

Besides, where else learn would we Voltaspeak?

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Bring your Bronze to the Cons?

The Guide. We've all seen it and we've all hashed it out. Good news or bad? You'll easily find an opinion to match whatever you want to hear. The status quo on most GA books has collectors wondering where the market is heading. Meanwhile, dealers report increased sales for low grade Gold, and high grade keys that are priced fairly. Silver collectors seems to revel in the new lower prices for lower grade books, while high grade collectors are coming back to the market, meanwhile, '70s collectors continue to set record after record at auction for books of all grades.

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-45)

It's funny how a given market works. Where a bargain is perceived, collectors seem to be willing to continue to spend top dollar on comics. It just might not be one book, but a handful of titles instead. Yet the amounts that continue to be spent are very impressive indeed. Low grade keys and off beat titles continue to be popular, along with low grade Timely and DCs. As more and more restored books come onto the market, a premium for unrestored books in FN or better is clearly evolving (already premiums are being charged). Only time will tell what exactly shakes out on this topic.

Sales: Action #97 FN $325; All Winners #11 VF/NM $1,100; Batman #3 GD $900; Captain America #37 appFN $425; Dynamic #1 FR $200; Human Torch #19 GD $75; Modern #32 VF/NM $325; Prize #1 appVG $250; Real Fact #5 GD $145; Shadow #1 FR $350; Sub-Mariner #1 GD- $1,800; Superworld #1 GD $470; USA #12 VG $250; Wonder Woman #27 VF $510.

Atom Age (1946-56)

Collectors are hoping that this year's convention season will yield a few obscure gems. Reports are that mail order doesn't seem to satisfy the needs of Atom Age collectors the way it used to, perhaps the amount of odd and/or unseen (Gerber) issues is even more depleted than we think. Obscure Matt Baker still tops the want lists of many, with pre-code horror, (which seems a bit easier to find, although more expensive) running a very close second. Collectors have recognized that those long dormant pre-Code crime books can offer up some exciting covers, even better interiors, and a whole host of undiscovered wonders. But, as always, where to find these books is a continuing challenge.

Sales: Broadway Romances #1 FN $200; Clue Comics #V2, #2 FN $140; Down with Crime #1 VG $76; Forbidden Worlds #3 FN $100; Haunted Thrills #2 VF $170; Journey Into Mystery #2 GD $125; Leave it to Binky #1 VG $90; Mary Marvel Comics #1 GD $200; Millie the Model #1 GD $130; My Secret Life #25 VF $165; Nellie #1 FN+ $165; Prison Break #4 FN $95; Racket Squad #14 VF $135; Secret Loves #3 VF/NM $200; Space Squadron #1 VG $105; Superman #76 VG $150; Terrors of the Jungle #19 FN $110.

Silver Age (1956-69)

A lot of Silver is now trading well (Guide adjustments/fine-tuning has helped), and the future is looking especially bright for pre-1964 material in VG or better. Some dealers I checked with are selling Silver with ease while others seem to be experiencing some trouble, especially for higher grade, post-1965 books. The whole "Silver Shakeup" of the last 18 months has at least resulted in an increased effort on the part of many dealers to re-instill confidence and reestablish customer trust... and many have redoubled their efforts to keep customers happy. Some dealers have even gone back to their stock to re-grade with an eye towards stricter standards. There have been examples

(Continued on page 74)

MARKET REPORTS

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budsystem@worldnet.att.net

Same Old Stuff

I have been quite busy the last few months going to conventions and hunting for comics. Not only for my customers, but for my own collection as well. My findings really disappointed me. It seems convention organizers are having their shows way too close together. This is great for them since they are primarily concerned with getting people through the door. However, this really hurts the serious collectors. By the time people actually get to see a dealers selection of books they have already been looked at by hundreds of collectors from all over the country, not to mention the dealers looking for comics for their clients. I think it really keeps collectors from having a fair shot at any quality material. How many times have you gone to a show and seen the same dealers with the same comics on their wall? I could almost tell you what is in a dealer's wall display from memory because they are so often repeated over and over. Let's see some new material out there!

Amateur Restoration Blues

The second thing that really disturbed me was the amount of restored comics I saw. It has nothing to do with the fact the comics were restored either. I believe restoration is wonderful for comics and really helps them survive. Also a properly restored book can enhance its value as well as its appearance. The key word is properly. I saw so many comics with work that was clearly amateur. It made me really

(Continued on page 74)

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Continued from page 72

understand why such an added value is placed on unrestored comics. What makes this even more frightening is some of these people who are ruining comics are actually posing as conservators!

Golden Age

I saw a lot of activity here. DC Golden Age sells well in all grades. Most important is pricing. These books do not need to be discounted at all. I have found that selling them slightly below Guide makes them quick movers though. In general, all Timelys sell, but most of the requests are for low grade Captain America. Also Marvel Mystery #9 is frequently requested but rarely offered for sale. All publishers are selling well. Demand really depends on artists, and covers. Keys sell really well for some... obviously depending on the key and the price. Sold here recently were Startling #10 and 18, Smash #14, Feature #27, Wonder World #3, among others.

Pre-Code

This area of the market is the strongest. All titles in the horror genre sell really well. Most often requested are the Gilmour titles. Most of these comics are impossible to find and continue to move at prices well above Guide. Second in demand are the Comic Media titles with Horrific and Weird Terror leading the way. Most of the other horror publishers sell, but at quite a reduced multiple and usually it is only the so-called icon covers that are consistent sellers.

Crime comics are good sellers, but don't get the multiples of Guide the horror books do. The best seller is Fight Against Crime with the highest demand issues being between #12 and 21. Romance sells well also since a lot of great books can be purchased for small sums of money. Fox romance sells well as do the romance books with the "sexually suggestive" covers.

Silver and Bronze

Here, these books sell well in high grade but not in the lower grades. I have seen so many copies of the so called scarce books from this era (like DC 100 Super Spectacular #5). I feel certain that they are not, in fact, rare.

Until next time... happiness is a Golden Age comic.

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Bronze Age Auction Report

I recently had a huge auction of primo 1970s DC stuff, and boy, it sold well! It featured runs of the hot DC titles from the '70s, such as the 100 pagers (many in VF+ or better), near full run of Super DC Giants (very tough run!), a full run of DC Special, House of Mystery/Secrets, Phantom Stranger, Witching Hour, Ghosts, Dark Mansion, Sinister House, Unexpected, Weird War Tales, From Beyond the Unknown, all of the Kirby 4th World, and obscure runs, like Strange Sports Stories, Weird Mystery Tales, DC Superstars, Wanted, etc.

The Super DC Giants garnered extremely active bidding. The #21 (love) in FN- went for

SCHIFFMAN MARKET REPORT

recently of some pretty spectacular books for sale, at amazingly reasonable prices. If investors have temporarily backed away somewhat, the slack has clearly been taken up by real collectors who view the reduced prices as a bonanza that doesn't come along too often!

Sales: Batman #172 NM $65, #198 NM $60; Brave & Bold #34 VF+ $1,200; Brother Power the Geek #1 NM $55; Captain America #117 NM $48; Combat #1 VF/NM $38; Flash #105 appVF $3,000, #123, NM $1,000; Hawk and Dove #1 NM $60; Secret Six #1 NM $55; Showcase #45 GD $32, #73 VF $55; Silver Surfer #1 FN $85; Strange Worlds #19 NM $210.

Bronze Age (1970-79)

Many Bronze Age collectors are hoping dealers will bring their Bronze stock to the convention circuit this year. It looks like if they do they won't be sorry, especially if Matt Nelson's auction results are any indication. It really looks like 1970s collectors are ready to join the ranks of big spenders (at least in Bronze Age terms). Many auctions (Matt's included) are setting records, including FN and VF copies of certain issues that have actually sold for multiples of Guide (whereas previously, NM copies have brought the premiums). This could be an indication that another level of escalation in the Bronze Age market may be about to happen. Here are a few examples from the auction:

Dark Mansion #3 NM $35; DC Special #1 NM- $25, #2 NM- $46; DC 100pg Super Spectacular #4 VF $109, #6 VF $90, #14 NM $50, #15 NM $43, #16 NM $72, #17 NM $46, #20 NM $34; From Beyond The Unknown #1 VF/NM $25; Ghosts #1 VF/NM $59; Shazam #8, #12-17 NM the set $95; Super DC Giant #21 FN- $95, #21 VG $42, #23 VF+ $49, #19 FN+ $60; Witching Hour #1 NM $60; Wonder Woman #211 & #214 VF/NM both for $46.

On a final note, it was a sad day on Tuesday, April 7th when Alex Schomburg passed away. Most hobbies have a tough time boasting of a hero in its history. I felt we always had one, and certainly lost one... a great one. Just pick a Timely or an airbrush cover out of Gerber, any cover. Plenty of words come to mind to describe the work done those many years ago. "Genius" seems to lead the way, but that only describes the physical work. Yet after imagining the millions of eyes that saw his work over the past decades and the affect those images had, the word "friend" seems to fit better, especially when we look at the overall impact he had on collector's lives and the impressions of the times. Good-bye Alex.

$95, and the bidder would have gone to $125!!! This book guides for less than $10. The VG copy went for $42, once again possibly going higher. Some say the #21 is the hardest issue in the run to find. The #23 (Unexpected) in VF+ went for a whopping $49, nearly 5x Guide! Another shocker was the Jerry Lewis issue #19 in FN+. It went for $60, while Guide lists it for $8.

All other issues went well over Guide. I think this title is certainly the one to get. They're consistently tough-to-find in grade and in high demand by Bronze Age collectors. I've spoken with some folks that have been looking for some of these issues for YEARS!

The 100 pagers did real well if they were 1) in very high grade, 2) hard-to-find issues, and 3) not Batman. Apparently, the Batman issues have already been pricey for a while, due to his tremendous popularity this decade. I had some very nice copies that got no bidding (perhaps because my bidders already had copies in their collection).

The other common issues in mid-grade either sold very cheap or got no bids at all, such as JLA, World's Finest, and Brave & Bold. The real hot lots included Wonder Woman #211, #214 VF/NM for $46 (2x Guide), Shazam #8, 12-17 NM for $95 (very heavy bidding!), Superboy #202, 205 NM for $25, and of course the DC 100 page Superspectacular series. (Wow, did these go high!) They were beautiful, unread copies that were for the most part, FLAWLESS. Prices are as follows: #4 VF $109, #6 VF $90, #14 NM $50, #15 NM $43, #16 (Sgt. Rock) NM $72!!!, #17 NM $46, #18 NM $33, #19 NM $33, #20 NM $34, #21 NM $27.

The DC Special series fared well, with some issues bringing amazing prices. The first 10 or so are squarebound, so of course they're difficult to find in nice grade. The #1 in NM sold respectably at $25, but the #2 (Binky, very tough) in NM- went for a whopping $46, nearly 2x the #1!! The #3 in VF+ went for $30, still bringing more than the #1. The #6 and #7, both NM brought $24 and $21, both well over Guide. The rest up through #12 did well also.

The mystery titles did well if they were high grade. Pretty much every single lot of horror/mystery that was NOT in VF/NM passed, which underscores my last market report: if it's not high grade (with very few exceptions), it won't bring the money. Otherwise, the high grade set some very high prices. The Dark Mansion #3 NM/MT $35, Sinister House #3 NM/MT $46. Dark Mansion #1 VF $34, Ghosts #1 VF/NM $59, Witching Hour #1 VF $60, and Weird War Tales #1 VF $60. The #2 and up lots of these titles did well, going for $80-$125 apiece. From Beyond the Unknown #1 sold for $25 the #2-10 for $80, and the #11-25 for $110.

The Kirby 4th Worlds were dead on arrival, with only a couple of #1s selling. This is mainly due to the lukewarm status of the books in the marketplace, and they could not compete with the other lots in the auction. I think there's only so much money to go around, and these books just didn't make the cut. Also, the #2 and up lots were only in FN/VF condition, making them that much harder to sell.

The remainder sold at about Guide, with some highlights: Weird Mystery Tales (another undervalued series) #1-12 NM for $96, Batman Family #1-20 NM for $126, and a run of Supergirl Adventures in FN for $35.

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Comic book sales have been good this past month in Central Florida. Interest has been high for Silver Age Marvel and selected DC Golden Age. The lower price points in the 1998 Overstreet have helped propel sales. Hopefully we will see further price reductions as many books are still overpriced.

We recently set up at two comic book shows in Europe. Attendance was strong. Silver Age books moved reasonably well. The real surprise was the Golden Age market---it was dead at both shows. We brought over 200 prime pre-1950 books and moved very few. The interest level was very low. Collectors seem to only want 1960's and 1970's comics. Perhaps it will be another decade or so before the Golden Age books come into their own in Europe.

Silver Age (1955-69)

Marvel has sold well lately. All grades moved this past month. It reminded me of old times! DC also had a strong month. Dell, Gold Key, Charlton, Harvey and others were a bit slower. We bought collections that included books from all these publishers. There have been no shortage of collections to buy. Many pre-1970 books available.

Sales: Daredevil #1 VG $250, Fantastic Four #1 GD $995, Silver Surfer #4 VF $150, Spider-Man #38 FN $40, Flash #123 FN $250, JLA #1 FN $450.

Golden Age & Atom Age (1933-55)

Not much activity this month. We picked up a lot more than we sold. One neat collection we bought was a group of 220 lower grade non mainstream books 1948-1960.

Not many superheroes in this group but lots of horror, sci-fi and good girl. What a fun batch to pore through! They even have that wonderful musty smell! We also picked up a nice group of around fifty mid 1940's DCs that include most of the popular titles. Lower grade Gold continues to sell at a respectable rate. It is tougher to move the more expensive higher grade books.

Sales: Detective #108 GD $95, Batman #36 GD $125, More Fun #66 FN/VF $1,000, Sub-Mariner #4 VG $650, All Flash #14 VG $100.

Artwork & Toys

We picked up no art at all. We did get two nice Captain Action uniforms untouched in their original boxes. I wish more of that product would come my way! Aurora models continue to be in demand. Vintage Disneyana sells sporadically. Often times we need to discount in order to sell pre-1970 toys and related items.

Sales: Joe Carioca cel (1960s) $125, Penquin Aurora in box $395, Legend of Mulan preliminary drawing $50, 1959 Disneyland guidebook $35.

That concludes our month. I hope your Spring season is going well. We anticipate a HOT summer! When visiting Walt Disney World please stop by and say hello.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

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sonal reasons we buy books. Let go of embarrassment... I mean after all, you now own the book you so avidly searched for... a book, I might add, that I'd be proud to own a copy of... 3) Contributing editor Phil Barnhart has been working on just such an article for some months now. When his research is completed, I'll schedule the article for the first available issue.

They exist!

Michelle Nolan's article "Calling All Girls!" in CBM #58 was fantastic. Regarding the existance of Girls Life #s 4 and 5 (at least)... they exist! #4 is July and #5 is September, both from 1954. I have both in my own collection. #5 even has a navel covering technique where they removed a little... oh, wait... that's rat chew! Never mind.

Keep up the great work!

Eric Partridge, Pennsylvania

Down under-writer

Firstly let me thank you for including my article on Australian comics in CBM #58—it was a great thrill to be included in my favourite magazine. I was delighted to see my friend Roger Morrison get such great coverage, and could well understand his comments about people getting free advice and expertise from him—I've been taking advantage of his generosity with time shamelessly for years!

The feature on Mort Weisinger was wonderful (Calhoun and Nolan are so consistently excellent that it's easy to forget to comment on them!) and illustrated wonderfully your important editorial point about "time running out " for the first generation of comics creators... how I wish Mort was alive to "defend himself" against the seemingly universal personal opinions people had of him, but more so to hear his descriptions of a wonderful time to be around in the comics industry.

Also, I suggest that if you reprinted all your articles and columns from CBM #1-24, called it "CBM Archives" you'd have great sales!!

Dr. Tony Di Dio, New South Wales, Australia

Out of place?

Your fine magazine usually has insightful and interesting articles about comic history and creators, and that is why I find Bill Jenks' "Investing in EC" article in CBM #57 out of place. Mr. Jenks praises the high quality of EC comics, but the focus of his column is investment speculation and not the furtherance of interest in EC Comics.

This appeals to the worst instinct in collectors, profit, and should not be given such a prominent place in CBM. In addition, the logic behind this article is faulty and dangerous. Mr. Jenks provides the answer for ECs loss of relative value in the second paragraph of his article. "EC Comics quickly soared to be among the top-selling comics of the early 1950s, which were the peak years of sales in the history of comics." We understand the law of supply and demand so why print the remaining seven pages of Mr. Jenks' charts and graphs?

Horror comics have become more popular of late and Mr. Jenks laments that EC 's have not participated in this rally. ECs have lagged in value the past 15 to 20 years because their plentiful supply has exceeded their demand. EC fanzines existed in the 1960s and many of the comic shows of the 1960s and 1970s honored EC creators. There has been ongoing interest in EC comics since their demise in the 1950s and the continuance of EC reprints shows there is interest today. Peruse any comics related periodical or visit any big comic show, and you will find ECs widely offered for sale.

Mr. Jenks further confuses matters by raving about the high prices obtained at auction for Gaines File Copies. What relevance does the value of pedigree copies have to the value of their non-pedigree brothers? There is no correlation. Mr. Jenks also fails to mention that another Gaines file set of the first 23 Mad comics sold for $44,850 at the 1996 Sotheby's auction while the final bid at the 1997 Christie's auction for another set fell to $43,700.

ECs certainly are quality comics and they are much beloved by the professional press, but what does quality have to do with value? I would venture that if ECs had less quality and popular press that their values would be higher today because the supply of ECs would be lower and demand would increase along with the increased demand for other horror and sci-fi books.

I love EC Comics and I hope more people continue to read them. Please buy the originals if they give you satisfaction and enjoyment, but please do not buy them just because someone says they are undervalued.

Let us have more columns about comic history and please leave the investment speculation to the financial publications.

Michael Lee, New York

I enjoyed Bill's article and found his data and opinions rather interesting. I also strongly feel that the high prices obtained at auction for Gaines File Copies are extremely relevant to overall market conditions. It's relevent because certain comics in a certain condition sold at a documented price. As a collector and buyer, I want to know that information.

Further, I feel there is a direct correlation between the value of mid grade/non pedigree books (the most common) and three other categories: High Grade/non pedigree; mid-grade/pedigree, and High Grade/pedigree. The general demand and sales in any of these categories can affect demand, sales, and pricing in the other categories (ask any dealer). That's a clear correlation to me.

But however you feel about the article, I personally strongly support articles that attempt to make sense of comic values and prices and feel they definitely have a place in CBM… in balance with other historically oriented features of course.

Your well-written letter was excellent and really got me on my soapbox. Thanks for addressing this provocative topic… perhaps other CBM readers will join the fray…

In the envelope

Sending a check for $60 to extend my subscription to CBM for another year. From our previous conversations and correspondence I think you know how highly I regard your magazine. Getting CBM in the mail each month is a real treat. I don't want to miss a single issue.

By the way, I love my copy of CBM in an envelope. It means the magazine itself is protected and doesn't have the label attached to it. Is there some way the address label could include a code for the ending date of my subscription? I can never remember when my subscription ends.

Collin Alscher, California

We are unable to include a code on the address label, but we do send reminders with your magazine towards the end of your subscription. Thanks for your kind words.

Am I correct?

Thanks for printing my Wolverton article in CBM #58. Not only did it look good, but the whole issue was well-balanced and interesting.

Although I probably should have punched up certain portions of the text before submitting it, I would like to add these clarifications:

1) On page 63, I didn't mean to imply that Wolverton did covers for Cockeyed and Pageant magazines, only interior work. If anyone assumed that's what I meant, it was due to poor sentence structure on my part.2) In the checklist, the last new Wolverton art in MAD was in issue #137, not 127. I suspect this was a typesetting error.

Here's a bit of Marvel trivia which I've never seen anyone write about. Most fans of Marvel's Tales of Suspense in the 1960s know by now that the Iron Man stories credited to Adam Austin were in fact by Gene Colan. Colan once told me he used his pseudonym because he was working at DC (presumably on their war and romance titles) and didn't want them to know he was also working for Marvel at the same time. After reading your articles about Mort Weisinger, I understand why!

The inker on many of these stories was "Gary Michaels," and he did a superb job. In fact, if you compare these inks to those credited to Johnny Craig later in the series, the inking style is virtually identical. Since Craig was also working on Warren's Creepy and Eerie magazines under the pseudonym Jay Taycee around the same time, it is reasonable to assume that Gary Michaels was his early pseudonym at Marvel. Colan was not able to remember who "Michaels" was, and so, couldn't confirm this.

Interestingly enough, many of these same Warren magazines contained work by Gene Colan with no pseudonym (except for the lesser-know "Eugene").

Many people also wonder why Wally Wood's art for Gold Key's M.A.R.S. Patrol and Total War, as well as other comic work from 1964-1965 is so poorly inked. Many have suspected that he used assistants or attribute it to Wood's alcoholism. But take a look at Dan Adkins' work on X-Men #34. Only 2-3 years later, Adkins became a masterful inker in the Wood tradition, and a good penciler too. But his inking on this X-Men fill-in shows his immaturity at that time, and the inking definitely resembles the inking on many Wood comic jobs from the aforementioned period. Since Adkins was as assistant for Wood, and later is credited as inker for Wood in Creepy and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, I believe these were early Wood/Adkins art jobs.

Since Craig refuses to do interviews, how about it, Johnny and Dan? Am I correct?

Paul Wardle, Toronto, Canada

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Panel By Panel

A note of appreciation regarding the articles in CBM # 58 on Australian comics. They brought back many warm memories of my early days as an avid comics reader from about 1964 onwards. I particularly enjoyed Dr. Tony Diddio's article on one of the areas in which I collect; Australian reprints of American—and in particular DC - comics. As a child I desperately coveted the originals, which were generally unavailable here until the early 1980s (though strangely enough some, such as Green Lantern and the JLA, were usually sold locally), and looked down somewhat on the local black and white reprints which we had rely on; yet ironically I now collect these reprints much more avidly than I do the American originals. As well as having those wonderful nostalgic associations that motivate so many of us collectors, they are great, and relatively inexpensive, sources of classic and often obscure DC material.

I was also pleased to see the article on Roger Morrison and his index and price guide to Oz comics. I used to be a fairly regular customer of Roger's when he lived in Sydney, operating out of an anonymous, somewhat out of the way suburban shopfront which, when you entered it, turned out to be a veritable Aladdin's Cave of old Australian, British and American comics. While I haven't got a copy of his book yet myself I'm sure, given his expertise, that it would be invaluable for anyone interested in the subject.

Somebody else who should be mentioned in regard to Australian comics history is the late John Ryan, whose book "Panel By Panel" (1979) was, to the best of my knowledge, the first full length history of the comic strip and comic book in Australia. Though long out of print, it is well worth tracking down if you are interested in

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 77

these topics. "The John Ryan Collection," his personal collection of Australian comics, is now housed in the National Library of Australia here in Canberra.

I always find CBM interesting, but these articles made the latest issue particularly enjoyable.

Mark Cannon, Canberra, Australia

In its entirety

Picked up my April copy of CBM and the first thing I did was read the Letter from the Editor, then I turned to the letter column.

I can say something that you can't say in print. "What a bunch of cry babies we've got out there!" I have made several attempts to purchase a copy of that Neal Adams issue for a friend, but none proved successful, so when you advertised that you would be reprinting this article in the forthcoming issue (#56), I anxiously awaited its arrival. The Neal Adams article was there in its entirety along with new material that made up the regular issue. As always—entertaining and informative and well worth the cover price.

Personally, I was satisfied with CBM #56 and in your defense, not that you need one, you did alert CBM readers that the forthcoming issue would contain the Neal Adams article—so people were warned. Secondly, the Previews Magazine also gave a summary about CBM #56 prior to its publication. You made the right decision and if there is a way to reprint other great articles (especially from the first 21 issues) you and your staff should do that. I know that I would be in line to purchase my copy.

Regarding the price increase that you spoke about, if it is the only way to guarantee that you will keep publishing those great articles along with those classic covers each month then I say go for it. Your publication is well worth it for the reading pleasure and enjoyment that it gives to its readers each month. That is a tribute to your staff and their ability to accomplish that each month and you should be recognized for that.

Stay well until next time and keep up the good work.

Dennis A. Brennan, New York

Infamous reprint issue

I'm sure you are sick and tired of comments on the "INFAMOUS" reprint issue of CBM # 56, but I had to add my two cents worth. You've taken a lot of undeserved flack over the Neal Adams reprint and frankly I don't believe it's warranted. Issue #40 was perhaps the best issue of CBM and this issue became a very hot back issue, and YES I have seen the issue listed at $40 to $60. I was lucky enough to get my issue at cover from a dealer who knew its value, yet he couldn't bring himself to gouge me for its true price. This in my mind clearly indicates that a reprint was required and desired by many CBM readers. Double Sigh!

Everyone who bought CBM # 56 knew it contained the Adams story so stop the belly-aching and simply enjoy both it and the new material.

After all the cost of the issue is insignificant when we consider the amount of money we invest in our hobby and helps support the best magazine in the business.

So, kudos' to you Gary for meeting the needs of your readers! Looking forward to more great Gold, Silver & Bronze Age stories in the next issue of CBM.

John R. Stuart, Ontario, Canada

Triple Sigh!

Jay Ward Comics

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy CBM. I work part-time at a comic shop, so I eagerly await the new issue every month. Aside from the wonderful illustrations and cover reproductions, I especially enjoy the articles. (Being a former history major, I've always appreciated the effort that goes into research.) Anyhow, I was wondering if there was ever any work done on any of the Jay Ward character comic books? If anyone would need a photo gallery, I could certainly help. While I also love and collect superhero comics, I feel that the above genre is unfortunately never given its proper due. I thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you soon. Keep up the good work with CBM.

Bob Kuhl, Ohio

Frustrating Anomalies

Have a bone to pick with the annual Overstreet Price Guide and when I say Guide I include the recent update included with CBM #54.

My partners and I recently struggled to open Southern California Comics & Collectibles to the public in time for convention season. We had a combined stock of 75,000 unsorted comic books from 1939 to the present to sort and price for retail store and convention sales.

Coincidentally, the Overstreet Price Guide was released. We accepted the expected price reductions and spent three months pricing our books with that Guide, watching many of the prices drop on our Silver and Gold books. One such price drop was on the Fine condition value of Batman #90, reduced from $120 to $93. No problem. We followed through and made the price changes. Then, the 28th edition of the annual Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide hits the stands.

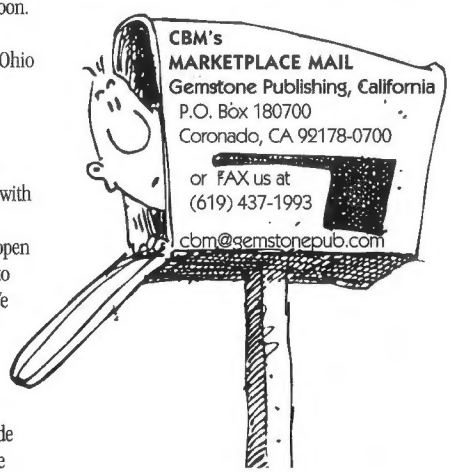
I began a routine price comparison spanning the previous year's Guide and the new one, anticipating even more changes. Instead, I discovered frustrating anomalies. In the interest of shortening this letter I will provide one example. Check the Fine condition value of Batman #90 in the new Overstreet Comic Book Guide. The value is the same as it was in the '97 Guide. How is it that it dropped to $93 in the Overstreet Update and then returned to its original $120 value in the new Guide?

I found other discrepancies between the Guides. Needless to say, this caused us to go back and re-price books to correspond the new '98 Guide. A lot of work I want to blame on someone, but I'm unsure whom to blame.

Jamie Newbold & Bob Capoocia, via E-mail

I'll ask.

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:



The French Connection

Dear CBM... on a recent business trip to Brussels, Belgium, I had a short break and did a bit of souvenir shopping for my three children. I stumbled across an old book shop that had a variety of esoteric items including toys and—to my delight—a stack of old comic books. These books were French editions—the prevailing language in Brussels—and most of them were 1980's Marvels.

Reaching deeper into the dust at the bottom of the stack, I came upon a few remarkable books that would be of special interest to Silver Age DC sci-fi collectors. Although they may not be scarce at all (by French standards—please recognize that I have no clue about this) they were a fantastic find to me. All of these books were dated 1958, 1959, or 1960 and were French reprints of 1950's DC sci-fi. They had color covers and b/w interiors.

The most interesting two items were what appeared to be *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery In Space* "annuals" containing four issues each of various DC sci-fi editions. The neatest thing was the fact that the annuals had glossy color covers of each book bound within the annual. It appears that they were unsold individual editions bound together and sold as an annual (similar to EC annuals).

As a fellow fan of DC Silver Age, I am sure you are aware that DC gray-tones from the '50s are rather popular now. That's why my socks were knocked off by this French reprint of the 1950's DC *Strange Adventures* gray-tone cover on *Adventures Fiction* #10. Although a reprint, this is certainly a very interesting item.

STRANGE ADVENTURES
featuring A DOUBLE-LENGTH SCIENCE-FICTION THRILLER...
"HEART of the SOLAR SYSTEM!"
THE MECHANICAL HEART-BEAT IS SLOWING DOWN! IF IT STOPS—THE WHOLE SOLAR SYSTEM WILL DIE!

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I'VE GOT THE BEST CARDS—FOUR PLANETS! I WIN THE GREATEST PRIZE IN THE UNIVERSE—FORMULA X-Z-99!
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Le progrès scientifique est l'œuvre des hommes de science qui se penchent sur les problèmes d'analyse ou de synthèse que propose à leur observation le spectacle des phénomènes naturels.
Mais le progrès scientifique ne peut pas se concevoir hors d'une ambiance de curiosité et d'intérêt des masses. Il ne manque pas de lecteurs de journaux qui sautent d'abord sur la colonne où l'on relate les
un CHOIX UNIQUE en SCIENCE-FICTION
performances des « Spoutnik » ou des « Pionnier » avant de s'inquiéter des dernières pirouettes de la politique et de la diplomatie.
L'humanité du XXe siècle sent que le grand fait du siècle se passera dans l'espace.
En réalité, donc, la littérature de Science-Fiction n'est que le ressac de la grande vague d'effort scientifique qui se prépare à lancer l'humanité dans les étoiles !
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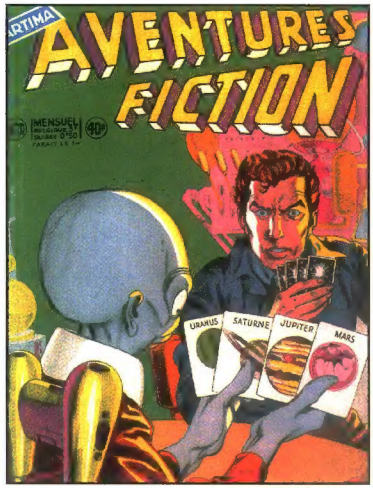
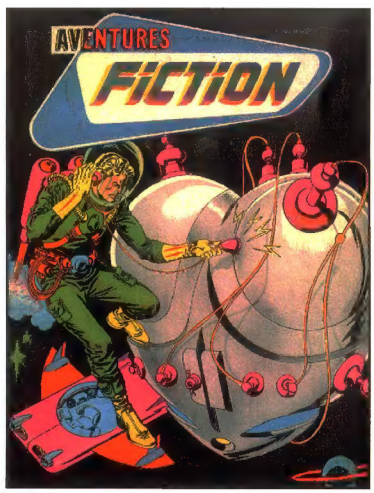


The reprint of Strange Adventures #79 (Apr '57) with its bizarre "alien snowmen" cover is easily recognizable on the back of Adventures Fiction #10... but the other five, non DC, covers elude immediate identification. Perhaps CBM readers can help nail these down.



Seeing this classic cover with the "Adventures Fiction" logo is definitely a curiosity.

Besides the front covers which reprint the *Strange Adventures* "Planetary Poker" cover (#80, May 1957) and the "Giant Mechanical Hearts" cover (#93, June 1958), I've also included the back cover ad of *Adventures Fiction* #10 as it features in color an amazing assortment of additional 1950's sci-fi covers reprinted from other publishers. The reprint of *Strange Adventures* #79 (April 1957, upper left) with the bizarre "Alien Snowmen" cover is easily recognizable, but the other five elude immediate identification. Perhaps other *CBM* readers can help nail these down.

At any rate, I hope these items are as enlightening and interesting to you as they were to me. It is nice to know that Europe was able to enjoy the great Silver Age DC science fiction classics, practically as they first appeared in the 1950s. This is especially true since they are one of the many gems of our favorite form of Americana.

Patrick M. Kochanek, M.D.

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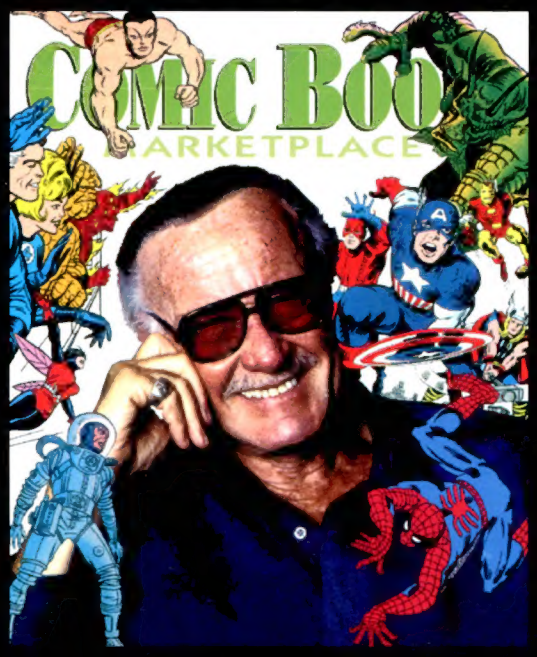

CBM #61
Stan Lee Tribute Issue

CBM #62
Joe Simon Tribute Issue

CBM #63
Celebrating Superman's 60th!

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